

BINGANG



Club Crosby

July 1994

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Most of you have paid your dues for 1994, but some have not. On your mailing label, directly above your name, is the date your membership expires. We would appreciate payment as soon as possible after that date.

If the club is to remain financially stable, it is necessary that all members pay dues on a regular basis. We would not like to drop any members for non-payment, but it may become necessary to do so. If any of you are no longer interested in receiving *Bingang*, please drop us a note or postcard.

Please follow these instructions for payment of dues:

TO OUR MEMBERS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Send a check or money order for \$11.00, made out to Club Crosby, to:

Editor, *Bingang*

P. O. Box 3849

Kirkwood, MO 63122-0849

Canadian members must pay in U. S. dollars by means of a postoffice money order or an international bank draft drawn on a U. S. bank. Canadian currency and personal checks on Canadian banks are not acceptable to our bank.

TO OUR MEMBERS IN EUROPE

Ken Crossland of W. Midlands, England, is our European representative. He collects dues and does the mailing of *Bingang* for Europe and the British Isles. Magazines are air-mailed to Ken in bulk from the U.S. He distributes them to the members. Dues are \$16.00 and must be submitted to Ken in an amount equivalent to \$16.00 U.S. Send dues or notice of non-receipt of *Bingang* to:

Ken W. Crossland

9 Arden Drive

Dorridge

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W. Midlands B93 8LP

England

Checks or money orders should be made out to K. W. Crossland.

TO OUR MEMBERS IN AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND SOUTH AMERICA

We cannot accept foreign currency or personal checks, as it is too difficult and expensive to get them cashed. Money orders or bank drafts must specify payment in U. S. dollars. Personal checks will be returned, unhonored. Dues are \$16.00, and journals are sent airmail. Send your remittance, made out to Club Crosby, to:

Editor, *Bingang*

P. O. Box 3849

Kirkwood, MO 63122-0849 U.S.A.

The picture on the front cover of Bing Crosby and starlet Linda Sundahl is from an NBC publicity still for the 29th annual "Bing Crosby National Pro-Am Championship." Courtesy of Helen Beck.

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Bingang

VOLUME LVIX, NO. 1

JULY 1994

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Readers Write

Dear Wayne,

A new AM station in Baltimore—WWLG (LG for “legend”)—recently spent an hour featuring Bing during announcer Ken Jackson’s “Brown Bag Time.” This is a daily feature from noon to 1:00 spotting such performers as Bing, Como, Lee, etc. He played all eras of Bing from the Rhythm Boys to “Seasons.” Very well done and very enjoyable. The station is located in the Lord Baltimore hotel, 20 W. Balto. St., Baltimore, MD 21201.

—Malcolm Holt, Glen Burnie, MD

Dear Wayne,

I want to relate a very amusing and heartwarming experience I had just before this past Christmas. I was shopping in a very popular discount store when I heard somewhere in the store a recording of “White Christmas” playing. Although the arrangement seemed to be that of Bing’s record, the singing left something to be desired. Finding the source, it happened to be someone demonstrating a “Karaoke,” a tape recording and microphone system used to sing along with a pre-recorded instrumental tape. I couldn’t resist walking in and taking control of the mike. There I was, with my sloppy trench coat, my Crosby hat and pipe, singing the most popular song in the world. No one can match the real king, Bing, but I am a baritone who has always been dedicated to the Crosby style, and so the very hint of Bing Crosby at Christmas compelled a crowd of people in this store to drift over to this scene and stand silently as I warbled and then gave me (really Bing Crosby) a big ovation. I told the crowd that Bing Crosby was still alive (in our hearts) and that they had just witnessed a “Bing sighting.”

—Bill Fowler, Louisville, KY.

Dear Wayne,

Thanks again for another great *Bingang*. We were very happy to read that a Bing stamp is finally going to happen, although it is somewhat of a disappointment that he isn’t being honored alone. He deserves to be treated with the same respect as Elvis and then some. I guess we will be buying a lot of stamps to get just a few of Bing. Thanks for the long-awaited news.

—Mrs. Jeanne Kaminski, Pittsburgh, PA.

4 *Jeanne, you will want to read the article by Steven Lewis in this issue. —Editor.*

Dear Wayne,

This is just a note to say that I think that you are doing a great job with *Bingang*. In the last issue, I was pleased to read that Bing must have really liked Judy Garland and had a lot of respect for her. I think that it was when I first saw her in *Pigskin Parade* that I fell in love with her. I’ve been a fan of hers ever since. I hope that you get some answers to Greg Van Beek’s question, “Does anyone know of a Judy Garland fan club?”

I became a fan of Bing’s when he was host of the Kraft Music Hall radio show. I still have the first 78 record, and many more, that he made for Decca. The two songs are “I Love You Truly” and “Just A-Wearyin’ For You” (Decca 100 A and B).

—Stan Ziminski, Massapequa, NY.

Dear Wayne,

This past year was very good to us Crosby fans. More and more new CDs came out with good material, especially that MCA 4-disc set featured in the December *Bingang*.

I have the *Goldmine* issue that you mentioned. It was certainly well-done and interesting. In fact I bought 2 copies. One I leave in the trunk of my car. Then if I stop for coffee or lunch I continue reading this most informative article.

1994 looks interesting—if we get our stamp!

—Richard Plessner, Monsey, NY.

Dear Wayne,

[As to] the forthcoming stamp, I’m glad we agree. Bing was *not* ordinary; he was one of a kind. That’s the way his stamp should be.

—Helen Tolton, Lakeport, CA.

Dear Mr. Martin:

Thank you very much for sending us the back issues of *Bingang*. This helps keep us current with your publication. I look forward to receiving the next issue.

I have been kept busy with Crosby related activities. Currently, we are making a brochure on the Crosby Collection at Gonzaga to place in hotel lobbies. This will help let people know that we have this collection. Also, we are beginning to look into selling Crosby souvenir items such as T-shirts, mugs, postcards, and key chains. The little revenue we make will be used to continue preserving the Crosbyana collection.

Thank you again for sending us back issues of the *Bingang*.

—Stephanie Edwards, Special Collections Librarian, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

The Editor's Page

THE LEGENDARY YEARS. The 4-CD set issued by MCA has received excellent reviews in many publications. We have reprinted as many as we could round up and find space to print.

Many of the reviews combined the Crosby review with evaluations of boxed sets by other singers, most frequently with the 12-disc Columbia set featuring Frank Sinatra. Comparisons of Bing with the other singers is positive by all the reviewers we have read. They wrote of Bing's "casual, cracker-barrel charm," his "Dickensian range in song," his "universal popular[ity]," and his "casual, rhythmically urgent singing style." The set is certainly a critical success, and we hope that it has also been a commercial success for MCA. We heard that the set was nominated for a Grammy Award, but we have no details about that, except that it didn't win one.

Jim Determan has written (see "New Releases") that there has been a gradual reassessment of the classic American popular song by popular singers of the present day. No doubt this reassessment has extended to the classic singers of these songs—people like Bing Crosby, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee... the list could go on and on. Also it seems that the imminent demise of the twentieth century has encouraged us to look back over what has transpired over the last 95 years and put it all into some kind of perspective. Bing will be remembered far into the next century. How many other performers can we say that about?

GOLDMINE ARTICLE REPRINTED. Beginning in this issue we are reprinting in serial form the excellent article by William Ruhlmann that appeared in the December 24, 1993 issue of *Goldmine*. This issue covers the Whiteman era. What few errors there were have been corrected with the author's permission. Our thanks go to Arne Fogel, who painstakingly checked the article for mistakes in what is an outstanding piece of research. Also we thank Bill Ruhlmann and the editor of *Goldmine*, Jeff Tamarkin, for permission to reprint.

OUR YOUNGEST MEMBER. Our youngest member is now Charlie Grainger, of Island Heights, NJ., who is ten. He told his aunt, member Claire Grainger, that he would like to join Club Crosby and receive *Bingang*. Claire enrolled him in the club and wrote that he just loves Bing and that she is "one proud aunt." Welcome to the club, Charlie. We are proud of you, too!

BING'S STAMP. Many of you have written to express your disappointment with the fact that Bing's stamp will appear on a sheet of stamps honoring four other popular artists instead of being an individual issue. Some of these letters have been reprinted in this issue. Be sure to read Steve Lewis' letter to the Stamp Commission, as this letter sums it all up very nicely.

Your editor certainly cannot disagree with your feelings. Bing deserved his own stamp, and so did the others who are on the sheet. It is unlikely, however, that the post office will change its mind. At least we can take comfort in the fact that Bing is in good company with Al Jolson, Ethel Waters, Nat Cole, and Ethel Merman — some of the most respected performers in the history of show business. We are glad that the stamps are reasonably attractive and the post office did not use any of those horrible caricatures (like the one of Theda Bara!) they have foisted upon us in the past.

THE EDDIE CANTOR APPRECIATION SOCIETY. We are pleased to announce that we have completed an exchange agreement with the Eddie Cantor Appreciation Society through which we will trade information and copies of our newsletters. In the forties and fifties Eddie Cantor was a favorite guest in your editor's household on radio and television. The E.C.A.S. publishes a monthly newsletter, running at least six pages per issue. Dues are \$15.00 per year.

If you are interested in joining, write to Sheila R. Riddle, P. O. Box 312, Mount Gay, WV 25637, or you can call her at (304) 752-8521.

Incidentally, the May issue of their newsletter contained a profile of Club Crosby member David Lobosco.

A BIG THANK YOU! Your officers want to thank the members once again for all the material that you continue to send to us. Without your help the journal would be a very scrawny one, indeed! We can't always use immediately the material we receive, but all of it is carefully preserved, and every now and then we find just the right picture or article for a particular issue.

Can we ask a favor? If you send info on CDs, please be sure to include the record company and the CD serial number (such as MCA MCAD4-10887), also country of origin, if available. This will help us a great deal.

Thanks, also, for the extra money "for the kitty" that some of you send to us. It helps us have some little "luxuries" like printer ribbons and white-out.



Swingin' (On A) Star

The Road To BING CROSBY

By William Ruhlmann

This article originally appeared in the December 24, 1993 issue of *Goldmine*. It is being reprinted in serial form by permission of the author and the editor of *Goldmine*. The type has been reset without editorial changes except for those approved by the author. A few minor typos have been corrected. Original pictures have not been used.

PART ONE

"If you read my story, it'll be obvious to you—it's obvious to me—that I haven't worked very hard. The things I've done are the things I've wanted to do. Doing them was no great sacrifice. And I've been heavily paid for having fun while I did them. Singing or movie acting has never been drudgery for me. So I don't know that my story contains an inspirational point of view. However, it is certainly shot full of another commodity—luck."—Bing Crosby

On Thursday, March 15, 1945, the day that his career as a popular entertainer peaked, Bing Crosby had no plans to attend the ceremony that would mark that event. This was, of course, the Academy Awards show, and Crosby was up for Best Actor for his performance as Father Chuck O'Malley in Leo McCarey's film *Going My Way*.

Crosby had never been nominated for an Oscar before, and he didn't expect to win. Conventional wisdom probably agreed with him, since his competition included his *Going My Way* co-star Barry Fitzgerald,

who, oddly enough, had been nominated for both Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor for the same performance. Logically, one would have assumed that Crosby and Fitzgerald would split the *Going My Way* vote, throwing the award to the other major nominee, Alexander Knox, whose nomination for the title role *Wilson* was one of the 10 garnered by that two-and-a-half-hour epic about President Woodrow Wilson, the same number that *Going My Way* had gotten. (The other Best Actor nominees were Cary Grant in *None But the Lonely Heart* and Charles Boyer in *Gaslight*.) When asked if he thought he'd win, Crosby had replied, "I don't think so. This guy—what's his name—Knox ought to make it."

Anyway, Crosby had other things to worry about. He was in rehearsal for the follow-up to *Going My Way*, *The Bells of St. Mary's*; he had his regular weekly live half-hour *Kraft Music Hall* radio show on NBC to prepare for (the evening's guest was Artie Shaw); and probably most important to him, he had a golf game to play.

It was at the 12th hole of the Lakeside Golf Course at six p.m. that Crosby's film studio, Paramount, tracked him down. Crosby, who was in golfing clothes and (as usual when he was off-screen) minus his toupee, suggested to the company men that his parents be sent to the eight o'clock ceremony at Grauman's Chinese Theatre in his stead. His mother, however, disagreed. Catherine Harrigan Crosby told her son, "You'll go or you'll never hear the end of it from me," and Crosby dutifully put on a suit—but no hairpiece—and went along.

Maybe he just didn't like the idea of appearing on the rival ABC radio network, which was broadcasting the

Academy Awards nationally for the first time. In any case, Crosby came to the microphone when his name was announced by his friend Gary Cooper (after whom he had named his firstborn son), who called his performance in *Going My Way* "superb."

Crosby was characteristically patriotic and self-deprecating. "This is a real land of opportunity when Leo can take a broken-down old crooner and make an Academy Award winner out of him," he said while the crowd laughed at the facial gestures made by his movie partner Bob Hope, the show's co-host, behind his back.

Despite the reluctance with which he acknowledged it, Bing's Crosby's Academy Award for Best Actor for *Going My Way* marked the culmination of a 20-year rise in every aspect of show business to an unprecedented pinnacle. At that moment, Crosby was the #1 box office star in the U. S., the #1 radio personality and the #1 recording artist. It's practically impossible to describe the equivalent of what that would mean today. Suppose, for example, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Howard Stern and Michael Jackson were ... no, it's just too hard to imagine. And even if you could combine those figures, the entertainment world is too different today to make any comparison valid. For one thing, there's more competing media, starting with television. For another, even the most popular figures have a much narrower appeal, much—as the pollsters would say—"higher negatives." Lots of people can't stand Howard Stern, but nobody disliked Bing Crosby.

Crosby was, in fact, perhaps the most liked performer of his time, which in today's terms means that words like "bland" would be ascribed to him. The kind of popularity Crosby achieved in the 1930s and '40s is not possible today, just as the kind of popularity that Michael Jackson has achieved wouldn't have been possible then.

And yet, there is a line that connects the two. When you examine American popular music of the 20th century, beyond the obvious musical and social trends, the technological changes that have taken us from the barbershop quartets to the Beatles and from cylinders to CDs, there is always a single male singer at the top. From the turn of the century up to the end of the 1920s, it was the now nearly forgotten Billy Murray. In the '20s, it was Al Jolson. At the start of the '30s, Crosby beat out such radio crooner competitors as Rudy Vallee and Russ Columbo to replace him. In the '40s Frank Sinatra, with his swooning bobby soxers, challenged Crosby and, after a career lull, he reigned supreme in the '50s until he was forced to share his crown with the new king of rock 'n' roll, Elvis Presley. Presley gave way in the '70s to Elton John and to Michael Jackson, who continues, on a shaky throne, today.

Despite the extreme shifts in musical taste since the '30s, that big, ballad-singing male voice, usually a baritone (shading toward tenor in youth, toward bass in maturity), has been a constant in American popular music. It is, initially, the sound of Bing Crosby, a microphone-friendly "croon," somewhat conversational yet capable of a steady legato. It is a reassuring voice,



Barry Fitzgerald, Ingrid Bergman, and Bing Crosby at the 1945 Academy Award ceremonies. All three won Oscars for films made in 1944.

whether singing of love or loss, a voice that suggests continuity and perseverance. Each of Crosby's major successors (and many of his minor ones) employed it less frequently than he did, and one can, in fact, trace an uptick in emotionalism and vulnerability from Sinatra to Jackson. But Crosby set a pattern in popular music from which it has never completely diverged.

Of course, his was the sound of his time, the years of Depression and world war. Just as, for example, a minor successor like James Taylor sounds more saccharine, less moving, when you listen to his early '70s recordings outside the context of those emotionally fragmented times, so Crosby's singing is best understood in the context of what it was reassuring his listeners against—economic deprivation and the onset of war. When he sang "Pennies From Heaven," one of his biggest hits of the '30s, the context of the Depression Era was clear. And, though songwriter Irving Berlin never intended it, the words "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas" spoke to servicemen away from home and their loved ones on the homefront about what they had lost and what they were fighting for.

It may be that Crosby's almost-perfect timeliness in the '30s and the '40s was what put him, increasingly, out of step in the post-war entertainment world, such that he scored only one newly recorded Top 10 hit after 1951. But then, Crosby's career in the '50s, '60s and '70s was a part-time one. Though he continued to appear in films as late as 1974 and recorded, made personal appearances and shot a Christmas TV special the year of his death, 1977, these decades were the lingering half-life of a career that had reached its apex in and helped to define an earlier era.

Since his death, Crosby's stature has been diminished by craven biographers (one of them his own son) who, on specious grounds, have sought to tear down his reputation. Though they have not succeeded, time has

done greater damage. Today, we wistfully gaze at a few of Crosby's films and listen to a couple of his recordings, usually around Christmas, and, fleetingly, long for his gone world. He seems to come from a time when the enemies were outside of ourselves and our faith would see us through. Maybe we don't really want to go back to that world; maybe, as Crosby's detractors would have it, it was a patriarchal world, too rigid and simplistic to respond to the complexities in which we now find ourselves. Maybe we are freer now and, in some skeptical, too-knowing way, happier.



Maybe. But when Bing Crosby starts to sing in his confident, slightly solemn way, his voice is still evocative of an America we grew up believing in and which, at least for the length of the song, we believe in again.

Meanwhile, Crosby's historical accomplishments are secure. He recorded approximately 2,000 different songs between 1926 and 1977 and may have sold as many as 500 million records. He appeared in as many as 100 films between 1930 and 1974, and some of them were among the biggest box office hits of their time—he himself ranked at the top or in the top 10 of the biggest box office stars for almost two decades. He hosted hundreds of radio shows from 1931 to 1954 and was the top radio star for 18 of those years. Arguably, he was the dominant popular entertainer of his time, and his time marked the birth of the modern media—Crosby hit at a crucial time, when movies had begun to sing and dance, and when radio had just emerged as a national force, when record-making had just upped its sound quality.

In those senses, he truly was lucky. But he also was able, while giving the appearance of making no effort at all, to conquer all these media simultaneously, such that it would have been hard, from the mid-'30s to the mid-

days without hearing him or seeing some mention of him. Though some have tried to denigrate it, his really is a Cinderella success story about a young man who comes out of the sticks to take over the world (as John Lennon once described the career of the Beatles).

Certainly, Tacoma, Washington, the town of Crosby's birth, is as unlikely a starting place for an international star as Liverpool would be decades later. Bing Crosby was born there, in a house his father had built, at 1112 North J Street, probably on May 2, 1903. The confusion about his exact birthdate comes because of the lack of a birth certificate and the obfuscating efforts of Hollywood publicity men later on. Crosby himself, in his 1953 autobiography, *Call Me Lucky*, (as told to Pete Martin, Simon & Schuster), followed the Hollywood line and claimed to have been born in 1904, even though his own brother, in an earlier biography (*The Story of Bing Crosby*, by Ted Crosby, World Publishing, 1946, a revised edition of the 1937 version credited to Ted and Larry Crosby) left the unmistakable impression that he had been born in 1901.

In 1957, Crosby obtained a copy of his Baptismal certificate (Catholics are baptized soon after birth) while preparing to marry his second wife. Not made public until shortly after his death, this document gave May 3, 1903, for his birth, and though the exact day may be off (Crosby's family always celebrated the second as his birthday), the year is unmistakable, since it is part of a lengthy record of 1903 births. (In his introduction to DaCapo's 1993 reprint of *Call Me Lucky*, Gary Giddins writes that Crosby was born "in the early hours of May 3rd." We will have to wait for the fall 1995 publication of Giddins's biography of Crosby to see his documentation of this assertion.) Nevertheless, the erroneous 1904 date continues to dominate most biographical accounts of Crosby and even appears on his tombstone.

He was named Harry Lillis Crosby, taking his first name from his father, Harry Lowe Crosby, a 32-year-old bookkeeper in the local government who was a descendant of Captain Nathaniel Crosby, a founder of Portland. His 29-year-old mother was second-generation Irish, the daughter of what different biographers call a plumber or a builder. Harry Crosby had to convert to Catholicism before their marriage.

The Crosbys had three sons before Harry Lillis: Larry, born January 3, 1895; Everett, born April 5, 1896; and Ted, born July 30, 1900. All three would become involved in handling their younger brother's career. After Harry came two girls, Catherine, born October 3, 1904, and Mary Rose, born May 3, 1906. A seventh child, Bob, arrived August 15, 1913. He would grow up to become a bandleader.

The most momentous event of Crosby's early life occurred when he was three, in July 1906, when the family moved inland to Spokane, Washington. A change in administration in Tacoma had put the elder Harry out of a job, and he found employment bookkeeping at the Inland Brewery in Spokane. There the family would stay

until it was beckoned to Los Angeles by its successful son.

In *Call Me Lucky*, Crosby recalls that his father spent part of his first paycheck on the new job buying a phonograph and notes that among the early records he heard were those of Henry Burr, Denis O'Sullivan and Oscar Seagle and an unnamed group performing songs from the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta *The Mikado*. Barry Ulanov, whose biography of Crosby (*The Incredible Crosby*, Whittlesey House, 1948) is the best book on him even though it covers only part of his life, quotes Crosby's teachers from Webster grade school that they always knew he was coming since they could hear him singing and whistling as he walked the few blocks to the school.

Crosby earned his nickname at the age of seven or eight, when he was christened "Bingo from Bingville" by his next-door neighbor, Valentine Hobart, due to his devotion to a newspaper comic called "The Bingville Bugle" that featured a big-eared character named Bingo. Shortened to "Bing," the name caught on with everyone except his mother.

In his last year of grade school, 1915-1916, 12-year-old Bing Crosby first became involved in elocution contests, which he would continue into high school. Always a favorite activity of parochial schools, elocution would help give Bing a clear, distinct public speaking voice to go with his singing talent and help him considerably when he got to radio and movies.

In September 1916, Crosby followed his three older brothers into Gonzaga high school, named for St. Aloysius Gonzaga, which was attached to a four-year college as well. Living in a family of nine supported by one income, Crosby, like his brothers, was encouraged to take part-time work, and he did, his favorite job during his high school years being one as an assistant at the Auditorium Theater, where he saw such traveling shows as *George White's Scandals* and *Sinbad*, starring Al Jolson.

Music also came to him by way of the newly emerging technology of radio, when, in 1917 or 1918, his brother Ted constructed what was then called a "crystal set," one of the first in Spokane.

At the start of the new decade, on January 17, 1920, Prohibition went into effect. Liquor was illegal in the United States. It's not clear what effect this had on Inland Brewery or on Harry Crosby's job, though his son Everett would work briefly as a bootlegger. But Prohibition would shape the decade during which Bing Crosby got his start as an entertainer, and his career would be affected by the rage for drinking brought on by those who wanted it lifted.

Crosby graduated from Gonzaga high school in June 1920 and became a freshman at Gonzaga college that September. His first two years were spent taking general courses, and at the start of his junior year in the fall of 1922, he declared his major. It was law. He began clerking in a law office as well.

At the same time, however, he was becoming more and more interested in music. He became part of a semi-professional college group, called either the Dizzy Seven or the Juicy Seven, for which he served as drummer. Subsequently, Crosby joined or helped organize (stories vary) a group called the Musicaladers patterned after some of the emerging New Orleans-style jazz bands of the day. The Musicaladers featured Al Rinker on piano, his brother Miles on alto sax and clarinet, Bob Pritchard on C-melody sax and his brother Clare (Fats) on banjo, and Jimmy Heaton on cornet.

Crosby's college years seem to have shown a diminishing interest on his part in academics and a rising one in music. He also noted in his autobiography that he learned he could make more money playing in a band than he could clerking in a law office. Some time during his senior year, 1923-1924, Crosby seems to have dropped out of Gonzaga to concentrate on music, though the timing of events in this period is conflicting in the various accounts. The Musicaladers had a residency at a Chinese restaurant called the Pekin Cafe for a time. Probably in the summer of 1925 (though perhaps earlier), they played a summer-long engagement at Lareda's, a dance hall just outside of Spokane.



Al Rinker and Bing Crosby

The group broke up in the fall, when the Pritchard brothers went off to college, but Crosby and Rinker stayed together. The pianist, who was three and a half years younger than Crosby, would stay with him for the next five years.

Crosby and Rinker performed with a singing quartet at the Clemmer Theatre, Rinker accompanying on piano, and then the duo developed its own act. They also decided it was time to leave Spokane. According to Ted Crosby's book, the two headed off to Seattle to find work when they loaded up a Model-T Ford and drove out of town on October 15, 1925, and only later decided to go on all the way to Los Angeles. But all other accounts suggest that L. A. was always the ultimate goal of the trip. Rinker's sister, Mildred Bailey, had already established herself as a singer there, and Crosby's brother Everett worked there as a truck salesman.

The tale of young people going to Hollywood to become rich and famous is an old one celebrated especially by Hollywood itself. What's amazing about the Crosby saga is that his rise to stardom, though it did not occur overnight or without a few bumps, was as steady and as rapid as it was.

The two stayed initially with Mildred Bailey, who helped them get an audition for the Fanchon and Marco vaudeville circuit, which booked theater tours up and down the West Coast. "We did our routine for [Marco]," Crosby recalled. "Rinker sat at the piano and I stood beside him, and we did two or three numbers like 'San,' 'China Boy' and 'Copenhagen'; then comedy songs like 'Paddlin' Madelin' Home' and 'Row, Row, Row' and 'Get Out And Get Under.' He booked us ..."

Marco booked them as part of "The Syncopation Idea," a 13-week multi-act tour, at \$75 a week between them. Shortly after arriving in L.A., they had already climbed onto a medium-level rung in the show business world, which was dominated by the variety show approach of vaudeville. After that first tour, they hooked up with "Will Morrissey's Music Hall Revue" for \$150 (or \$250, depending on who you believe) a week, then jumped to \$300 a week by signing to the Paramount-Publix theater chain.

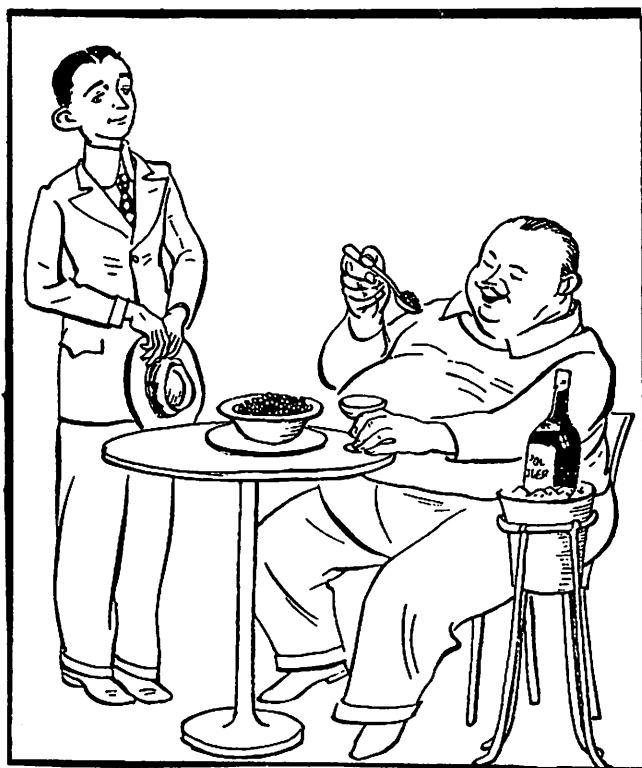
All of that was remarkable enough for "Two Boys And A Piano," as they billed themselves (Crosby having jettisoned the drum kit, retained a hand cymbal that he struck occasionally), but their next jump up was amazing. While they were appearing at the Metropolitan in L.A., Crosby and Rinker got a message to meet with Paul Whiteman, who was at Sid Grauman's Million Dollar Theatre.

In September 1926, the 36-year-old Whiteman had been what chart researcher Joel Whitburn calls "the dominant force in American popular recording" for six years, or since his first hit, "Whispering," sold two million copies. That was by Whitburn's reckoning (*Joel Whitburn's Pop Memories 1890-1954*, Record Research, 1986) 88 hits ago, and Whiteman was still going strong, leading a large pop-jazz ensemble that, with its smaller

groups, singers and specialty material, resembled something of a vaudeville show.

A couple of Whiteman's musicians had caught Crosby and Rinker's act, and though Whiteman was not in need of two more singers, he hired the two to join his troupe. This meant that they would sit in the orchestra (holding horns without mouthpieces or violins with rubber strings) until called upon to do their two- or three-song mini-set. The two of course jumped at the opportunity and prepared to join Whiteman in Chicago after finishing their Paramount-Publix commitment and making a triumphant visit home to Spokane.

Before that, however, they made their first recording, Walter Donaldson's "I've Got The Girl," with the Don



*Bing Crosby and Paul Whiteman
(From Pocket Books edition of "Call Me Lucky")*

Clark Biltmore Hotel Orchestra, on October 18, 1926. Reportedly, the released disc, Columbia Records 824-D, was sped up, thus ruining the Crosby/Rinker vocal performance. Crosby biographers Donald Shepherd and Robert F. Slatzer (*Bing Crosby: The Hollow Man*, St. Martin's Press, 1981), who spend most of their Kitty Kelley-like book wildly attacking Crosby, for once have kind words for this recording, even suggesting that, had it been released at the right speed, it would have been a hit. As it was, the hit version was recorded by one of the period's most popular singers, Gene Austin.

Crosby and Rinker made their debut with Whiteman at the Tivoli Theatre in Chicago on December 15, 1926, and were a success. One week later, they were in a recording studio with Whiteman's orchestra, cutting Ruth Etting and Morrey Davidson's "Wistful And Blue" for Victor Records, Whiteman's label. Crosby praised the song's vocal arrangement, which was done by



"The Rhythm Boys"

Whiteman viola player Matty Malneck. "With this arrangement," Crosby wrote, "we created a new singing style. Nothing for the ages, but a style. The best way to describe it is to say it was a vocal without words. We sang voh-do-de-do licks while [Malneck] ... played the viola as a third voice. It produced something of an unusual effect, and as there had been nothing like it, it was very popular." The hit version of the song, however, was by author Ruth Etting.

The Whiteman tour continued through the Midwest during the summer of 1926-1927, with the band finally returning to its home base, New York and the Paramount Theater in Times Square in January. There, surprisingly, Crosby and Rinker "died" (Crosby's word) or "bombed" (Rinker's). Biographer Charles Thompson (*Bing: The Authorized Biography*, David McKay Company, 1975) suggests that the reason for their failure was that, without a microphone, they simply couldn't be heard in the giant theater. Shepherd and Slatzer disagree, saying the Paramount was no bigger than the halls Whiteman had played in the Midwest. Their reasoning is that Crosby and Rinker were bringing a new, subtle jazz approach to singing before a New York audience more accustomed to belters like Al Jolson who "sold" their songs. In 1953, Crosby himself wrote, "I couldn't explain it then. I can't now."

Whatever the reason, it brought the first crisis in a career that had proceeded with stunning speed over the previous year. Soon enough, Crosby and Rinker were reduced to opening and closing the curtains at Whiteman's new nightclub on 48th Street.

Whiteman did, however, continue to use Crosby and Rinker on recordings. On February 10, 1927, they cut "Shanghai Dream Man" and on February 25, "That

Saxophone Waltz," though on both these dates the vocals were handled by a quintet consisting of Crosby, Rinker, Austin Young, trombone player Jack Fulton and violinist Charles Gaylord. On the 28th, however, Crosby and Rinker alone sang "Pretty Lips."

Still, audience indifference (which continued when the two were used as intermission entertainment at the Whiteman club) seemed to threaten looming unemployment for Crosby and Rinker. Then, in February, Whiteman suggested they turn the duo into a trio by adding singer, songwriter and piano player Harry Barris.

Barris, who was then 21 years old, already had a considerable resumé. He had been born in New York City on November 24, 1905, but moved in his early teens to Denver, where he studied music with Whiteman's father, Wilberforce Whiteman. He had then worked both as a single and with his own band on the vaudeville circuit, but was ready for a new offer in early 1927.

The team, which Whiteman dubbed "The Rhythm Boys," restored the momentum of Crosby and Rinker's career, perhaps because Barris was a more bravura performer than his new partners and in turn inspired them. According to the older discographies, Whiteman first tried recording with the trio on March 3, but the four takes made of "I'm Coming, Virginia" have never been issued. We have no way of knowing whether Barris actually appeared on these takes. Significantly, four days later Whiteman cut "Muddy Water" with a solo vocal by Bing Crosby, his first. The record, Victor 20508, reached the hit parade on June 11 and got to #11. (This is according to the chart composites in *Whitburn's Pop Memories*, which will serve as reference for all chart statistics cited here unless otherwise noted.)

Whiteman managed an acceptable take of "I'm Coming, Virginia" (without Barris) on April 29, along with "Side by Side," which is now considered to be the first recording in which Barris participated. The latter entered the charts in July, the former in September, both reaching the Top 10. It should be noted that these were only a few of Whiteman's record releases during the period. At this time, successful bands recorded frequently, as often as twice a month or more, and released new singles nearly as often. In fact, Whiteman's biggest hit in this period was an instrumental called "When Day Is Done" that spent four weeks at #2.

Nevertheless, with their recordings and appearances with Whiteman, the Rhythm Boys were a substantial success. On May 24, "The Paul Whiteman Orchestra" with the Rhythm Boys on vocals (and new recruits Red Nichols on cornet and Jimmy Dorsey on saxophone), recorded "Magnolia." But on June 20, "Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys," who according to Shepherd and Slatzer now had their own separate Victor contract, recorded "Mississippi Mud"/"I Left My Sugar Standing in the Rain" and "Sweet Lil"/"Ain't She Sweet," which were issued as the two sides of Victor 20783. (The orchestra was not featured, the only accompaniment being Barris's piano.) This release of "Mississippi Mud," which, according to Crosby, was credited to Barris alone, **11**

was not a hit, but a later recording would be.

The trio was not entirely out from under Whiteman's wing, of course, and, with Austin Young, Jack Fulton and Charles Gaylord, Crosby and Rinker sang "My Blue Heaven" with the orchestra (which had now been joined by trombonist Tommy Dorsey) on July 6. Upon release, it became a #1 hit.

In the summer of 1927, Paul Whiteman booked the Rhythm Boys on a 45-week tour of the Northeast and the Upper Midwest, on their own. They carried with them a large cut-out illustration of the 300-pound bandleader and a recording that introduced them as his proteges. What has stumped biographers, however, is why the trio did not stay with the main orchestra, which, depending on who you believe, did or did not tour Europe during this period.

Bing Crosby's autobiography and his brother's biography of him present many anecdotes from this tour, most of which revolve around drinking and related hijinks. Later biographers such as Ulanov and Thompson picked up the stories, but debunkers Shepherd and Slatzer largely discount them, based on a decades-later interview with Rinker and their own sense that, if things had gotten as out of hand as the stories indicate, the Rhythm Boys would have been bounced from the tour by Whiteman or angry theater owners.

However true the stories may be, the overall picture of 24-year-old Bing Crosby is one of a young man who has not committed himself completely to his chosen profession and has a few wild oats yet to sow. Shepherd and Slatzer's contention, if true, that he was unable to tolerate liquor and tended to fall asleep after a couple of drinks, and the overall milieu of the Prohibition Era and its thousands of speakeasies would have exacerbated that. In any case, the Rhythm Boys don't seem to have taken their job too seriously, and there is the suggestion that, even at this point, Whiteman found them unprofessional.

They were, however, pleasing audiences for the most part, and they were selling records. The group was back with Whiteman for a week of recording sessions at the Victor studio in Camden, New Jersey, August 16 to 22 that produced "The Calinda," a Top 10 hit featuring Crosby, Austin Young, Jack Fulton and Charles Gaylord, though a single featuring the Rhythm Boys with the orchestra, "The Five Step"/"It Won't Be Long Now," was not a success. Neither were such Rhythm Boys solo singles as "That's Grandma" (co-written by Crosby, Barris, and James Cavanaugh), cut in Chicago on November 11, or "Miss Annabelle Lee," also cut in Chicago, on November 17.

The Rhythm Boys were still in Chicago the following week for some sessions with the orchestra. These produced the single "Changes"/"Mary (What Are You Waiting For?)" (Victor 21103). Both songs had been written by Walter Donaldson. "Changes" featured both the Rhythm Boys and Fulton, Young and Gaylord on vocals, while Crosby alone sang "Mary." Newly added to the orchestra was cornetist Bix Beiderbecke, who

soloed on "Changes," so that, with the Dorseys and (on "Mary") Frank Trumbauer on C-melody saxophone, Whiteman's orchestra at this time was full of jazz legends. "Changes" entered the charts in February 1928 and reached the Top 10.

The Rhythm Boys seem to have resumed their long tour after the November 1927 recording session, but they were back in the studio with Whiteman several times in January 1928. These sessions yielded Whiteman's #1 hit "Ramona," with vocal by Austin Young. A single with "Ol' Man River" backed by "Make Believe" (Victor 21218) had vocals sung by Crosby.

This single was far more significant than Crosby's solo recording debut of a year earlier. For one thing, the songs were significant ones, both coming from the landmark Broadway musical *Show Boat*, written by Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern, that had opened the previous December. And then, both sides of the single were hits, with "Ol' Man River" the most popular version of this soon-to-be-standard, hitting #1, and "Make Believe" going into the Top 10. (On March 1, 1928, Whiteman would re-cut "Ol' Man River" using Paul Robeson, for whom it became his signature song.) There was also during this month a session featuring the Frankie Trumbauer Orchestra on "Mississippi Mud" with Crosby and Trumbauer singing. The resulting single, OKeh 40979, became a minor hit in April.

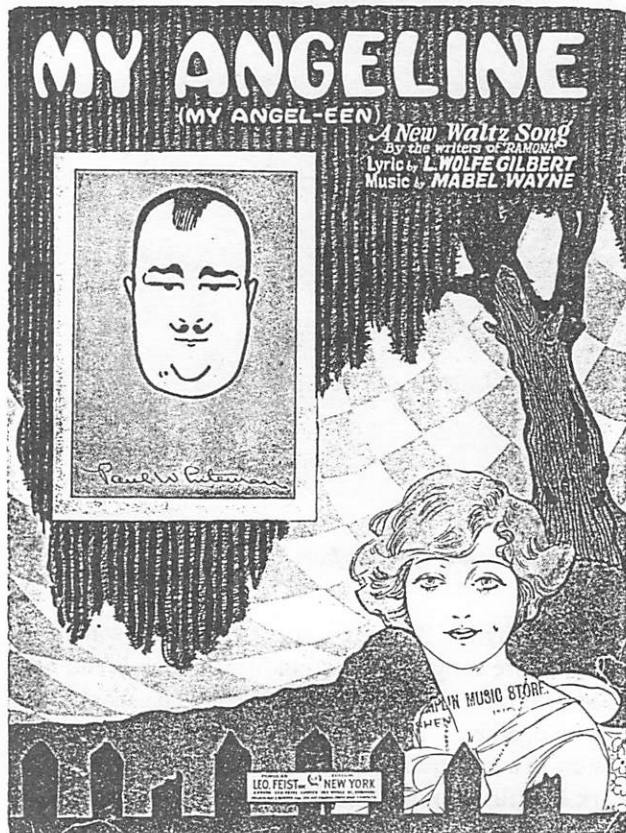
The hit Whiteman version of "Mississippi Mud" (which, according to Crosby was now mysteriously credited to "Barris-Cavanaugh") was cut in February with vocals by the Rhythm Boys, Fulton, Young, Gaylord and Irene Taylor. It made the Top 10, with its flipside, "From Monday On," a Barris-Crosby composition, charting too. Also recorded in February was Irving Berlin's "Sunshine," with a vocal by Crosby, Rinker,



A CD reissue of music from the Whiteman era

Fulton, Young and Gaylord, which reached the Top 10 as well.

There were more sessions in March, notably featuring Crosby leading on "I'm Wingin' Home" and soloing on "Lovable," and more in April with Crosby singing "I'm Afraid of You," but the only Crosby-related hits from the period were "It Was The Dawn Of Love," featuring Crosby, Rinker, Young and Gaylord, "Louisiana," featuring Crosby, Fulton, Young and Gaylord, and the Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart standard "You Took Advantage of Me" from the Broadway musical *Present Arms*, also featuring Crosby, Fulton, Young and Gaylord.



Sheet music from the Whiteman era

The April sessions were Whiteman's last for Victor; he moved to rival Columbia Records in May 1928. The first significant result of this association was a novelty song by British songwriter Harry Carlton, "C-O-N-S-T-A-N-T-I-N-O-P-L-E," with vocals by the Rhythm Boys, Young, Fulton and Gaylord. Other initial Columbia Whiteman hits featuring Crosby were "Evening Star" (sung by Crosby, Gaylord, Fulton and Young) and "Get Out And Get Under The Moon" (sung by the same quartet). Probably more of the Columbia tracks would have hit if Victor weren't issuing its final Whiteman sessions in competition at the same time, thus flooding the market.

Traffic had for the most part cleared by late September, when B. G. DeSylva, Lew Brown and Ray Henderson's "I'm On The Crest Of A Wave," from *George*

White's Scandals Of 1928, with a vocal by Crosby, Young, Fulton and Gaylord, made it into the Top 10. (The versatile DeSylva would later become head of production at Paramount Pictures when Crosby was its top star.)

In June, the Rhythm Boys had recorded Walter Donaldson's "Out of Town Gal," which would chart in December, but it was preceded by a seasonal single, Columbia 50098-D, "Christmas Melodies, Parts 1 and 2," pairing "Silent Night, Holy Night" with a Ferde Grofe arrangement of "O Holy Night" and "Adeste Fidelis." The interesting thing about this release, which features Crosby, Young, Fulton and Gaylord, is that Crosby's biographers are so insistent that he was reluctant six years later to record "Silent Night," considering it sacrilegious to make money off religion and only relenting when Decca Records agreed to donate the proceeds to charity. Apparently, in 1928, Crosby's conscience wasn't so disturbed.

When the record was in the stores in December, Crosby was in the studio with Whiteman cutting some of the most risqué material of the Roaring '20s. On December 22, after many attempts, Young, Fulton, Gaylord (and possibly Crosby) cut a version of Cole Porter's "Let's Do It," from the musical *Paris*, and on the same day, after several takes, the quartet (with Crosby leading) cut "Makin' Whoopee," the Walter Donaldson-Gus Kahn song from the musical *Whoopee*. Both became Top 10 hits for Whiteman.

A week later, Crosby slipped away to record lead vocals on both sides of a single by Sam Lanin's Ipana Troubadors, a session probably featuring both of the Dorsey brothers, who were about to leave Whiteman. The songs were "I'll Get By" and *Rose of Mandalay*. Crosby was back recording with Whiteman in January 1929. But he continued to moonlight with Lanin, cutting a session for the Sam Lanin Famous Players and another for the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra the same month. The latter session produced a version of "Let's Do It" that followed Whiteman's into the Top 10 in March.

Whiteman, meanwhile, perhaps recognizing Crosby's value to other bandleaders, increasingly was featuring him as a solo vocalist. He cut Irving Berlin's "Coquette" on February 28 and "My Angeline" on March 7. On March 14, there was a session credited for the first time to Crosby alone, with only a trio backing (Matty Malneck on viola, Roy Bargy on piano, Edward Quinn on guitar) that produced Columbia 1773-D: "My Kinda Love"/"Till We Meet." The next day, again under the auspices of the orchestra, Crosby recorded his next charting record, "Louise," which would go into the charts in June and hit the Top 10.

More Rhythm Boys recordings followed, but the next Whiteman hit with Crosby on vocals was another solo singing performance, "Little Pal," a DeSylva-Henderson-Brown composition from the film *Say It With Songs* cut on April 25 that reached the Top 10 in September. A minor hit (probably sung by Crosby, Rinker, Fulton and Cullen) followed in "Your Mother and Mine" from the

film *Show of Shows*, recorded May 16. The next week Bing and a small group of instrumentalists from Whiteman's orchestra cut Columbia 1851-D, "I Kiss Your Hand, Madame"/"Baby, Oh Where Can You Be?"

In June, the entire Whiteman orchestra boarded a special train and set off for Hollywood, where Whiteman was to make his first movie, *King of Jazz*, which was how he billed himself. Unfortunately, Universal Pictures had trouble coming up with a story line for the film, and the band whiled away the summer without doing any shooting. According to Charles Thompson, while they were in Hollywood in July and August, the Rhythm Boys appeared briefly in a film short for RKO-Pathé for which Crosby was paid \$25. Thompson does not name the film, but it may be *Two Plus Fours*, which is listed by Timothy A. Morgereth in *Bing Crosby: A Discography, Radio Program List and Filmography* (McFarland, 1987). Released in 1930, this would be Crosby's earliest appearance on film.

With Universal still fumbling for a script, Whiteman took his band back to New York on September 1. He had them back in a Columbia recording studio five days later, at which time Crosby, Rinker and Fulton sang "At Twilight." The next notable recording, however, came a week later with Crosby's solo recording of Irving Berlin's "Waiting At The End Of The Road," which would enter the charts in November. This, incidentally, is the last recording on which Crosby can be heard with Bix Beiderbecke.

On the 27th, Columbia recorded another session under Crosby's name, this one producing Columbia 2001-D, "Can't We Be Friends?"/"Gay Love." On October 9, the Whiteman orchestra cut "Without a Song" with Crosby singing and "Great Day," featuring Crosby, Rinker, Cullen and Fulton. Both became hits in December. They were preceded into the charts in November, however, by Columbia 2010-D, recorded October 16, which paired the same quartet singing "I'm A Dreamer, Aren't We All?" and Crosby alone singing "If I Had A Talking Picture of You."

On October 18, Whiteman cut "After You've Gone" with Crosby singing alone, which would hit the charts in February 1930. This was the orchestra's final New York session before they got back on a train (a regular one this time) to head back to the Coast: Universal finally was ready to shoot *King Of Jazz*. In Hollywood on Halloween Whiteman managed to cut an acceptable take of "A Bundle Of Old Love Letters," which had been attempted back in New York, with Crosby on another solo vocal. This record would hit in January 1930.

King Of Jazz, which began shooting in November, was now set to be a revue—in essence, a glorified vaudeville show on film—rather than, as originally planned, a fictional narrative starring Whiteman. As might be expected, given the prominence Crosby had achieved in Whiteman's recordings, he was scheduled to get a solo number in the film, "Song Of The Dawn," as well as singing with the Rhythm Boys and appearing as part of the orchestra. At some point during the film's produc-

tion, however, probably in February 1930, Crosby was involved in an altercation that included bootleg liquor, a girl and an automobile accident, with the result that he was sentenced to 30 days in jail.

He got out on a work-release agreement early enough to shoot "Song Of The Dawn," but in his absence the song had been rehearsed and prepared for filming with another singer, John Boles. When Whiteman came to record the song on March 21, Boles was not available, and Crosby led an unidentified vocal group and sang a solo verse and chorus bridge.

Crosby does turn up frequently in the finished film,



An English pressing of music from "King of Jazz"

however. The Rhythm Boys are seen at first singing some of their signature song, "Mississippi Mud," then break off and launch into "So The Bluebirds And The Blackbirds Got Together." They are also featured with the Brox Sisters in a production number called "A Bench In The Park." Still, though Crosby's name is actually mentioned—one of his fellow Rhythm Boys calls him Bing—he's easy to miss. The main Rhythm Boys section is partially done in a silhouette that doesn't show their faces.

Crosby seems to have retained some enmity over his loss of a showcase in the film. Twenty-three years after its release, he had unusually sarcastic words for John Boles in his autobiography.

Though he didn't say so, the complications over the film probably contributed to the split that occurred between Whiteman and the Rhythm Boys. They did a little more recording with the bandleader—sessions in Hollywood on March 22 and 23, 1930, produced charting versions of "I Like To Do Things For You," "You Brought A New Kind Of Love To Me" and "Livin' In The Sunlight, Lovin' In The Moonlight" (the last two Crosby solos). But after a final session on May 23, they did not record with Whiteman again.

According to Crosby, the specific cause for the split, which he says occurred during a Northwest tour after

King Of Jazz was completed, was a dispute between him and Whiteman over a bootlegger's bill that Crosby claimed not to owe but that Whiteman paid and took out of his salary. Whatever the momentary cause, the more general one clearly was that the Rhythm Boys had established themselves in personal appearances and on records as a separate act and were ready to go off on their own. Whiteman headed east; they went back to L.A.

At the same time, it should be noted that trying to establish themselves in the summer of 1930 was a nervy thing to do. Despite the evidence of their record hits, records had nothing like the kind of sales or exposure—and thus power to enhance a career—that they have gained since. The Rhythm Boys were by no means household names in 1930, even after three years of hit records. Then too, record sales were starting to plummet. The Depression had been signalled by the stock market crash of Oct. 28, 1929, and the growth of radio—with the national NBC network formed in 1927 and CBS following in 1928—initially threatened record sales as well. In 1927, record sales had hit a peak of 140 million units; by 1932, annual sales had fallen to six million.

The Rhythm Boys found work singing at clubs in L.A., starting with the Montmartre. They also looked around for what film work they could find. On August 26, they went into the studio with the Duke Ellington Orchestra and sang "Three Little Words" for the film *Check and Double Check*, a feature starring radio comedians Amos 'n' Andy in which Ellington and his band also appeared. In the film, some of the band members lip-synced the song. Released by Victor, "Three Little Words" went to #1.

While the Rhythm Boys were at the Montmartre, Crosby was introduced to an 18-year old actress whose stage name was Dixie Lee. Born November 4, 1911, in Harriman, Tennessee, her real name was Wilma Winifred Wyatt. She had grown up in Chicago, where she won a singing contest sponsored by Ruth Etting. This led to a place in the road company of the Broadway musical *Good News*, followed by a contract with 20th Century Fox and a move to Hollywood. Dixie Lee had already appeared in a number of films, such that, when she married Bing Crosby on September 29, 1930, newspapers reported she had wed someone named Bing Croveny (or so Crosby recalls it).

Dixie Lee continued with her movie career for some time, though Crosby maintains she hated show business and was happy to give it up eventually when she began having children.

Certainly, the Crosby marriage became one of the quietest and least publicized in Hollywood.

The Rhythm Boys, meanwhile, moved on to the Cocoanut Grove, where they appeared with Gus Arnheim and his Orchestra. Here the act became what Crosby calls "an overnight fad" where people "discovered" it. Barry Ulanov backdates this to the Montmartre and narrows it to a recognition of Crosby alone. "Talk about Bing began to make the rounds," he writes,

referring to the entertainment industry, while also noting that the Rhythm Boys became a hit with students from UCLA and the University of Southern California.

"More and more," Ulanov writes, "the Rhythm Boys were becoming a vehicle for Bing ... The kids who followed Bing, Harry and Al and their elders in the entertainment business, who had become the Rhythm Boys' avid fans, were mostly concerned about Bing, the songs he sang, and the way he sang them."

On October 29, Crosby went into the studio with Gus Arnheim and cut "It Must Be True," a song co-written by Harry Barris. On November 20, Arnheim and the Rhythm Boys cut "Them There Eyes," and Crosby sang Irving Berlin's "The Little Things In Life." All of them made the Top 10.

"Them There Eyes" was the last recording Crosby made with Al Rinker and Harry Barris. The breakup of the Rhythm Boys was precipitated by the acrimonious end of their engagement at the Cocoanut Grove. According to Barry Ulanov, they demanded more money and refused to continue when they didn't get it. The club's owner, Abe Frank, then called the musicians' union and had them put on its "unfair" list, such that union members could not play with them and they were effectively banned from going elsewhere. Crosby himself says he quit the Grove when Frank docked him (not the group) for missing a show "once too often" and he wouldn't accept the fine.

Crosby's truculence spelled the end of the trio, though Barris returned to the club shortly afterward. Despite the immediate circumstances, like the split with Whiteman, the split of the Rhythm Boys was a natural consequence of Crosby's rising star. "The break-up was inevitable," Al Rinker told Charles Thompson. "I think we'd reached the end of what we were doing and there was no point in going on. We weren't going forward, we were just doing a job. It was fun, but it couldn't go on forever."

According to Thompson, Rinker, who went on to be a radio and later television producer, had diminishing contact with Crosby over the years, which led to some bitterness. This may help explain why he later served as the primary (if not only) source for Shepherd and Slatzer's extremely negative portrait of Crosby during the Rhythm Boys years and their contention that Crosby's departure from the group was an example of his "ruthless" nature. (Barris, meanwhile, remained among Crosby's circle of friends, and he has many minor appearances in Crosby films in the '30s and '40s.)



A Rhythm Boys reunion with Paul Whiteman at the keyboard.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

BING - O!

A Collection of Bingo-like game cards which feature Bing's name or likeness



DO YOU KNOW YOUR TV STARS: Here's a game to test your ability in identifying popular Television Stars. Most of them are noted for their singing or musical ability. In 10 minutes, see how many you can identify by writing the name of the star in the space provided beneath each picture.



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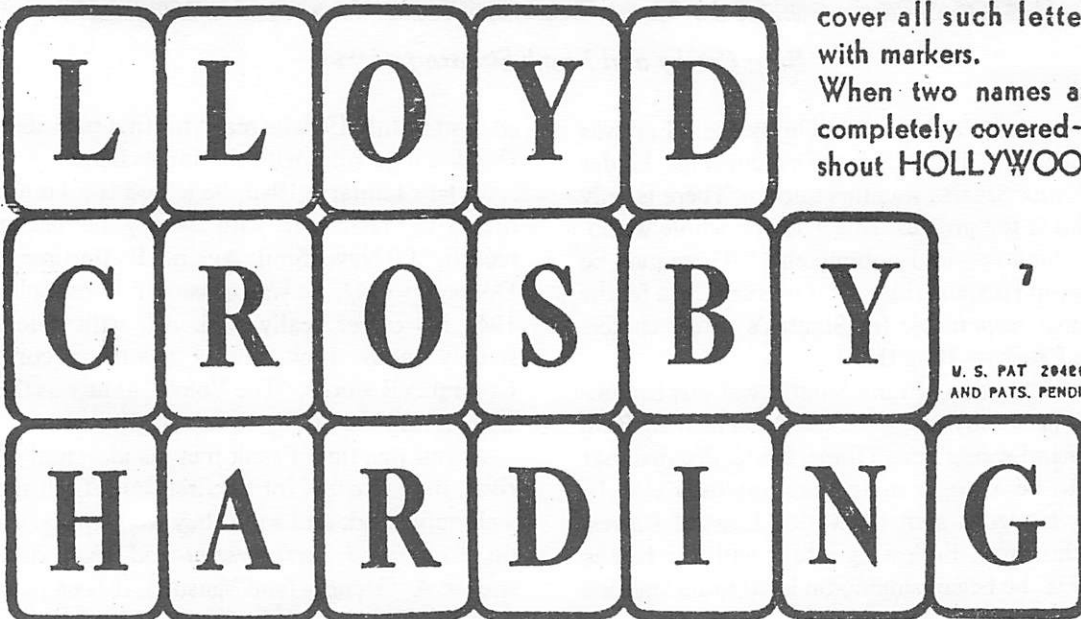


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I suppose every Crosby collector has a special affinity for the game of Bingo, just because of its name, although it has absolutely nothing to do with Bing. The three card games pictured in this article do have a Crosby connection and so bear further investigation. The first is from a spiral-bound booklet entitled *Bridal Shower Party Games*, published by the Leister Game Co. in 1957. The directions are self-explanatory. The second game, pictured on the right, is called *Pocket Whoozit?* and was copyrighted in 1985. It's quite similar to the first game in that you have to name the pictured celebrities, but there are also additional questions to answer for extra points. Finally we have a game card from *Hollywood Movie-Bingo* marketed by the Whitman Publishing Co. in 1939. Handily, this card also has the rules on it for quick reference. M.S.



◀ HOLLYWOOD ▶



When arrow points to letter on alphabet dial cover all such letters with markers. When two names are completely covered—shout HOLLYWOOD

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AND PATS. PENDING

Ol' Blue Eyes and the Ol' Groaner

By Greg Van Beek



Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra in 1944

Recently a music catalog arrived in the mail. In it was a full page listing of Frank Sinatra's recordings. Under the name *Frank Sinatra* was this quote: "There is only one guy who is the greatest singer in the whole world. His name is Sinatra—and nobody else." There may be some who would dispute this, but it was said by a fellow who was most responsible for Sinatra's career choice. His name is Crosby—Bing that is!

Around 1933 a young Frank Sinatra was fast becoming one of Bing Crosby's biggest fans. After hearing Bing on the radio and seeing him in films, Frank decided that he wanted to be a singer more than anything else. In 1935 Frank landed a spot on Major Edward Bowes' national radio show. Following a tour with the Bowes' troupe in 1938, he began singing on local radio stations in New Jersey and New York.

18 Soon after this, Harry James, a former trumpet player with Benny Goodman, offered him a job. Frank accept-

ed, and in July 1939 he made his first record. Altogether Frank cut 10 sides with the James band.

In late January, 1940, he joined the Tommy Dorsey orchestra. That year, with Dorsey, he had his first #1 record, "I'll Never Smile Again." By the time Sinatra left Dorsey in 1942, he was already a household name. In 1943 his career really took off, with a feature film, weekly radio show, and a recording contract with Columbia Records. "The Voice," as he was then known, was driving the bobby-soxers wild!

About this time Frank met his idol, and now closest rival, Bing Crosby, for the first time. Their meeting was well publicized, and soon they were appearing together on *Command Performance* and each other's radio shows. A "friendly feud" ensued. It became so popular that cartoons featured "the swooner and the crooner." The feud cooled, however, after a Crosby fan reportedly drove an ice pick into a Sinatra fan!

It was to be 1956 before they cut a record together, since they recorded for different record companies. It also was 1956 before they starred in a feature film together. By the time Bing and Frank made this film, both were Academy Award-winning actors (Crosby for *Going My Way* in 1944 and Sinatra for *From Here To Eternity* in 1953). Their film, *High Society*, is a favorite of both Sinatra and Crosby fans alike. Their duet on Cole Porter's "Well Did You Evah?" is a classic. The film had many great songs, including "True Love," which (with a little help from Grace Kelly) earned Crosby his 20th gold record. It was his last major hit record.

The following year Crosby and Sinatra were featured in a lavish TV show promoting the new auto, the Edsel. It is a very enjoyable show to this day, and it features a favorite Sinatra/Crosby duet, "September Song." What a blend! The show also featured Rosemary Clooney and Louis Armstrong. It won a Peabody award in 1958.

In December 1957 Frank welcomed Bing to his TV show. Together they sang many of the yuletide season's best songs, capped by a duet of "White Christmas." The song also was a hit for Sinatra in the mid 1940s. Two years later Bing and Frank were reunited for appearances on each other's TV shows. Bing's "special" also featured Louis Armstrong and Peggy Lee, and Frank's show featured Dean Martin and Mitzi Gaynor, as well as Bing. There was a cameo appearance by Jimmy Durante, and it was said that Bing, Frank, and Dean would star in *The Jimmy Durante Story*. Unfortunately, this film was never made. In 1960 Bing and Frank had separate guest appearances in Columbia's film *Pepé*.

Jumping to 1962, we find Crosby and Bob Hope starring in their final "road" film, *The Road To Hong Kong*. At the end of the film Sinatra and Dean Martin have cameos, joining Bing and Bob in outer space. Years before, in *Road To Utopia*, Hope and Crosby lost a talent competition, after which Hope remarked, "Next time I bring Sinatra."

The following year Crosby joined Sinatra's record label, Reprise, for a series of albums of songs from the Broadway shows *South Pacific*, *Finian's Rainbow*, and *Guys And Dolls*. Bing sang one solo on each of the first two albums, but for *Guys And Dolls* Bing sang two songs, being joined on both by Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra. Later that year Frank presented Bing with a Grammy Golden Achievement Award. It was known for awhile as the Bing Crosby Award. It has since become the Lifetime Achievement Award, and in March 1994 Frank was given this award.

This same year (1963) saw Crosby become a "rat-pack" member, starring in *Robin And The Seven Hoods* with Frank, Dean, and Sammy Davis, Jr. It was filmed in 1963 and released in 1964. Bing had pretty much of a "stooge" role, but he did have three songs in the film. In early 1964 Frank and Dean made a cameo appearance on a Bing Crosby TV special to sing a song with Bing from *Guys And Dolls*.

Also in 1964, along with the *Robin And The Seven Hoods* soundtrack album, Crosby and Sinatra released

two other albums together, both backed by Fred Waring. One was a tribute to America, and the other was a Christmas album. Each album traded off between Sinatra, Crosby, and Waring solos, with two Crosby/Sinatra duets on each.

In 1965 it was rumored that Sinatra, Crosby, Dean Martin, and others would star in a lavish Irving Berlin musical at MGM to be called *Say It With Songs*, but the project never materialized.

Later still it was suggested that Bing should play a role in the 1968 Sinatra-Lee Remick film *The Detective*, but Bing declined.

The last film that both Bing and Frank starred in was *That's Entertainment* in 1974. Each had separate scenes introducing film clips from MGM films. Bing introduced the "Well Did You Evah?" clip from *High Society*. *That's Entertainment, Part 2*, was released in 1976, but this featured only old film clips of Bing and Frank separately. This year (1994) will see the release of *That's Entertainment, Part 3*.

As far as we know, the last time Bing appeared with Frank was on a Bob Hope TV special in October 1975. Sinatra made a short appearance with Crosby, Hope, and John Wayne. It was at this point that Bing was beginning his "come-back" by doing concerts, recording several albums, and doing a lot of TV work right up to his death at age 74 on October 14, 1977. Just three days before his death, he was praising Sinatra on a BBC radio show, saying "Frances Albert had a great record of 'Summer Wind' and then proceeded to sing it.

Sinatra was obviously shaken by the death of Bing Crosby as was evident by his comments: "The death of Bing Crosby is almost more than I can take. He was the father of my career, the idol of my youth, and a dear friend of my maturity. Bing's death leaves a gaping hole in our music and the lives of anybody who ever loved him—and that's just about everybody."

Today, at age 78, the Chairman of the Board is still going strong. In fact, with his recent triple platinum *Duets* album and *Duets 2* in the works, he's more popular now than he has been for a number of years. Youngsters in their teens and 20s have discovered him, with a music video on MTV paired with BONO, the lead singer of the Irish rock band "U-2." This pairing and video reminds Crosby fans of Bing's appearance with David Bowie in 1977, which was released as a single and music video. Sinatra continues to do concerts all over the U.S. and abroad. As Bing remarked in 1972, "No one since Jolson can generate such electricity to an audience as Sinatra does." With each having such vast numbers of recordings and films, there is no doubt that people will continue to enjoy these legendary entertainers for generations to come.

For more information on Frank Sinatra and a source for his films, records, and other memorabilia, you can join the International Sinatra Society, run by Gary Doctor. The address is P. O. Box 7176, Lakeland, FL 33807-7176, phone 813-646-7650.

CROSBY AND SINATRA ON RADIO

- 1). **America Salutes The President's Birthday** (March Of Dimes Show) 1/30/43. NBC/CBS.
- 2). **Command Performance #104**. 2/20/44. AFRS.
- 3). **Command Performance #122**. 6/25/44. AFRS.
- 4). **Kraft Music Hall**. Guest: Frank Sinatra. 11/16/44. NBC.
- 5). **Frank Sinatra In Person**, presented by Vimm Vitamins. Guest: Bing Crosby. 11/20/44. CBS.
- 6). **America Salutes The President's Birthday** (March of Dimes Show) 1/30/45. NBC/CBS.
- 7). **Command Performance #166** (Dick Tracy in B-Flat) 4/29/45 (recorded 2/15/45) AFRS.
- 8). **Frank Sinatra Show For Max Factor**. With Bing Crosby. 5/2/45. CBS.
- 9). **Command Performance Victory Extra**. 8/15/45. AFRS.
- 10). **VJ Day Show**. 9/2/45.
- 11). **Command Performance**. 12/25/45. AFRS.
- 12). **G. I. Journal #105**. 2/-/46.
- 13). **Bob Hope Show For Chesterfield**. With Bing Crosby and cameo by Sinatra. 12/25/51. NBC.
- 14). **Bing Crosby Show For General Electric**. With Frank Sinatra. 3/21/54. CBS.
- 15). **Bing Crosby Show For General Electric**. With Frank Sinatra. 3/28/54. CBS.
- 16). **Monitor Birthday Salute To Frank Sinatra**. With Bing Crosby. 12/14/63. NBC.
- 17). **Monitor Salute To Bob Hope**. With Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. 3/11/62. NBC.

SINATRA AND CROSBY ON TV

- 1). **The Edsel Show**. 10/13/57. CBS.
- 2). **The Frank Sinatra Show**. With Bing Crosby. 12/20/57. ABC.
- 3). **Bing Crosby Show For Oldsmobile**. With Frank Sinatra. 9/27/59. ABC.
- 4). **Frank Sinatra Show For Timex**. With Bing Crosby. 10/19/59. ABC.
- 5). **Grammy Awards**. Sinatra presents Bing with Grammy Golden Achievement Award. 3/-/63.
- 6). **The Bing Crosby Show For Pepsodent**. With special appearance by Frank Sinatra. 2/15/64. NBC.
- 7). **A Quarter Century of Bob Hope**. With Bing and Frank. 10/24/75. NBC.

SONGS COMMERCIALY RECORDED BY BING CROSBY & FRANK SINATRA

- 1). **Well Did You Evah?** 1/17/56. Capitol.
- 2). **Fugue For Tinhorns**. With Dean Martin. 7/29/63. Reprise.
- 3). **The Oldest Established Permanent Floating Crap Game**. With Dean Martin. 7/29/63. Reprise.
- 4). **Let Us Break Bread Together**. 2/4/64. Reprise.
- 5). **You Never Had It So Good**. 2/4/64. Reprise.
- 6). **Style**. With Dean Martin. 4/10/64. Reprise.

- 7). **Mister Boogie**. With Dean Martin and Sammy Davis, Jr. 4/10/64. Reprise.
- 8). **Don't Be A Do-Badder**. With Dean Martin and Sammy Davis, Jr. 4/10/64. Reprise.
- 9). **Go Tell It On The Mountain**. 6/19/64. Reprise.
- 10). **We Wish You The Merriest**. 6/19/64. Reprise.

FILMS FEATURING SINATRA & CROSBY

- 1). **The Shining Future**. Two-reel short; one-reel version titled **The Road To Victory**. Warner Bros, 1944.
- 2). **Newsreel**. Featuring Sinatra, Crosby, Hope, and Kay Kyser at a war bond drive. 1944.
- 3). **All-Star Bond Rally**. Two-reel short. 20th Century Fox, 1945.
- 4). **High Society**. MGM, 1956.
- 5). **Pepe**. Guest appearances only. Columbia, 1960.
- 6). **The Road To Hong Kong**. Sinatra and Dean Martin make a guest appearance. United Artists, 1962.
- 7). **Robin And The Seven Hoods**. Warner Bros., 1964.
- 8). **That's Entertainment**. Narrators only. MGM, 1974.

CARTOONS FEATURING CROSBY & SINATRA CARICATURES

- 1). **Swooner Crooner**. Warner Bros., 1944.
- 2). **Catch As Cats Can**. MGM, 1948.
- 3). **Hollywood Canine Canteen**. Warner Bros., 1946.
- 4). **Curtain Razor**. Warner Bros., 1949.

Note: No doubt there were other Sinatra/Crosby radio and TV appearances. We can't vouch for the completeness of the listing, but it represents a majority of their appearances together.



Bing in the Sixties

By David Lobosco



Frank Sinatra... Elvis Presley... The Beatles—all were dominant forces in the 1960s. They seemingly commanded the record market, and although the sixties were the least productive years in Bing Crosby's career, he did record many excellent records that are worth mentioning.

Bing started the decade off on the wrong foot with the release of the album *Join Bing and Sing 101 Gang Songs*. A disastrous project, Bing attempted to latch on to the success of the Mitch Miller "sing-a-long" albums, but he fell short of the mark. Producer Ken Barnes once wrote "...one could easily be forgiven for thinking that Crosby was bent on selling quantity rather than quality."

Bing bounced back quickly with two underrated songs he recorded with the Bob Thompson Orchestra. "The Music Of Home," from an unsuccessful Broadway effort, was given an excellent treatment by Bing. He makes it both touching and beautiful. "The New Ashmolean Marching Society," which Bing sang on his old radio show, was given a rousing rendition from the orchestra and Bing. Although not a great song, Bing made a great recording of it.

Bing and Satchmo was truly Bing's greatest album of the decade. Paired with Louis Armstrong, most of the tracks are flawless, with standouts like "Dardanella," "Lazy River," and "Sugar." Bing was in perfect voice throughout the whole project and easily glided down to a low E-flat in "Dardanella." Songwriter Johnny Mercer even makes a cameo appearance in "Lazy River."

Crosby joined forces with old cronies like Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra for several Reprise albums spotlighting Broadway shows. Although Bing is not the center of attention on the *South Pacific* album, he recorded the definitive rendition of "Younger Than Springtime." Listening to it makes one believe that Bing could have played the entire role in *South Pacific*.

Many critics and Bing Crosby fans disparage the recordings Bing made with Mishel Piastro and the Longines Symphonette as some of the worst in his career. However, even though I agree they were not Bing's best, some of the renditions are quite touching. "What'll I Do," one of my favorites, is given a touching treatment by Bing. "Always," "All Alone," and "In The Chapel By the Moonlight" became solely "Bing Crosby songs" through his expert interpretations and phrasing.

The sixties represented a time in Bing's life where he spent more time with his second family and remained in semi-retirement. Although he came out of retirement in the seventies, Bing ended the decade of the sixties on two sour notes. In 1968 he recorded two albums of mostly modern songs. *Thoroughly Modern Bing* and *Hey Jude*. *Hey Bing* represented the worst of Bing, and Crosby himself is often quoted as saying that the *Hey Jude* album was the worst he ever made. Despite the ups-and-downs that occurred in Bing's career, his voice was still the voice of our times, a voice that seemed to soothe and calm us down during the turbulence of the sixties.

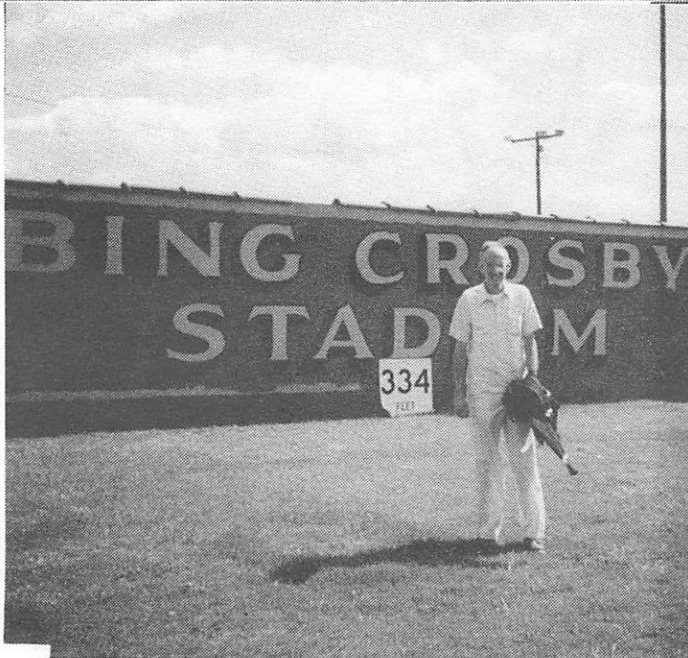
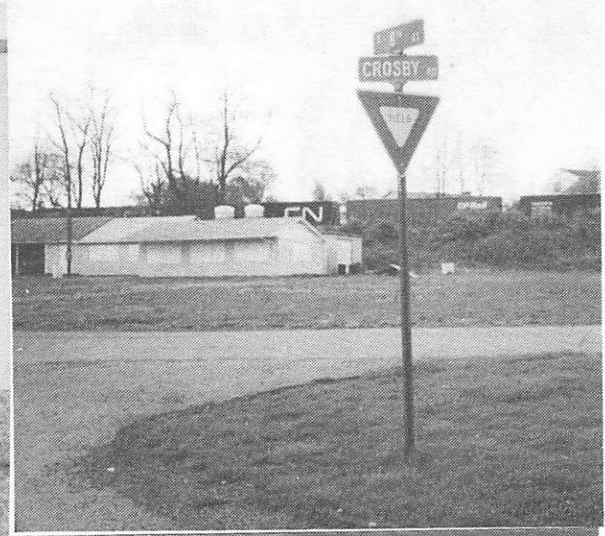
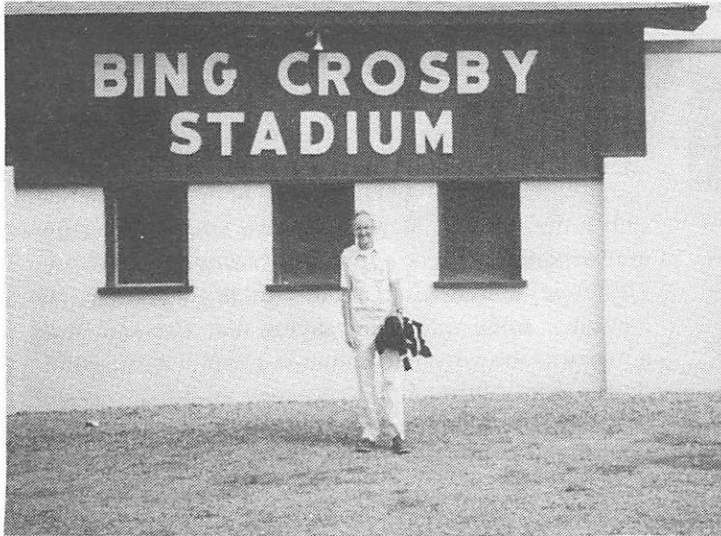


The Bing Crosby Stadium

By Milton Cummings

While visiting my sister and her husband in April of this year, I asked them if they could take me to Front Royal, Virginia, to see the Bing Crosby Stadium, which I had known about for some time. So we went there on a Saturday and stayed about three hours. The Bing Crosby Stadium was dedicated in April 1950. It's still in pretty good shape and is being used all the time. I talked with Helen Thompson, who works at the information center, and she remembers Bing's visit there in 1950 very well. She told me she lives right there in Front Royal and remembers seeing him. Bing made a personal appearance there, and the premiere of the film "Riding High" was held at the same time. Bing gave money for the stadium, and it was a great success. It's a nice place to visit if you ever get a chance. It's not far from Sky Line Drive. All in all, I had a nice visit there and was happy to see that the Crosby Stadium still exists.

Editor's Note: That's Milt in a couple of the pictures.





AWAITING BING as he stepped off the train in Washington, D. C., was a committee to welcome him to the city's annual cherry blossom festival. But Bing couldn't stay; he was due in Front Royal for *Riding High* preem.



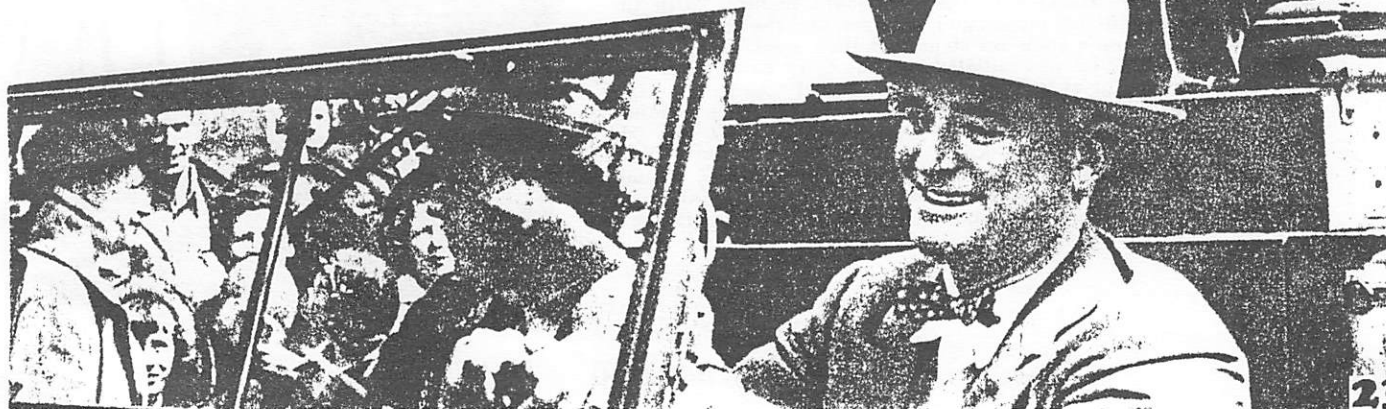
LUGGING the cans of film, Bing and his host, State Senator Raymond Guest, head for motorcade and ride to Virginia town.

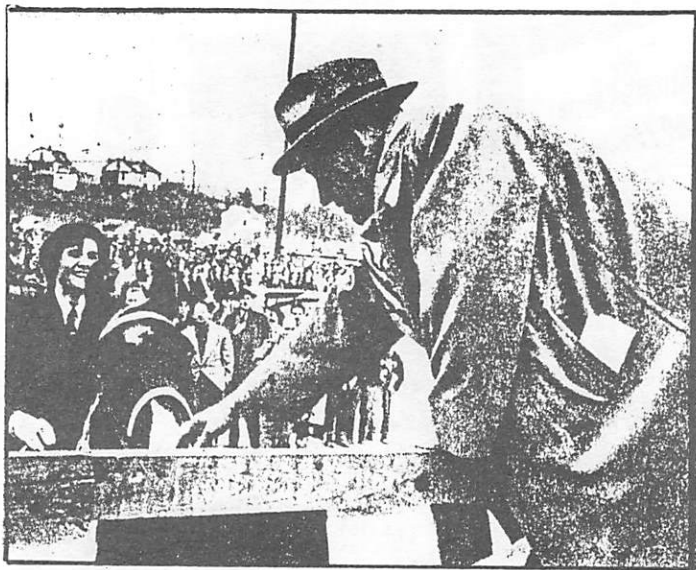
Bing's Day

Attending the Premiere of One of His Pictures for First

Time, Bing Sang, Danced, Rode a Jeep, Sampled Cake,

and Made 50,000 Friends in Front Royal, Va.





POPULATION of Front Royal is 8,000, but 50,000 people saw the parade, with Crosby riding atop a jeep driven by Senator Guest (see left below). There were goings-on all day long, including exhibition of trick horses, to one of which Bing is feeding a lump of sugar, above; judging of a cake-baking contest; dedication of Bing Crosby Stadium, at which the Groaner shivered atop the Guests' private fire wagon (right); special showing of *Riding High* for kids in the afternoon; open house at Virginia's famous skyline caverns. Bing knocked himself out attending every event; loved every minute of entire day.



DISTINGUISHED GUESTS included the Vice President and Mrs. Barkley, above with Bing and their hostess, Mrs. Guest, arriving at the theatre for the showing of the Paramount picture. With the help of Perry Bodkin, his pianist and arranger, and the Rhythmairs, Bing put on an hour's show on stage and then went on to a high school dance, where he was initiated into the Gary Crosby fan club and made the day for at least one high school girl (see right). Gala celebration netted a total of \$15,000 for the Bing Crosby Stadium fund, of which Crosby gave \$3,600, because he "doesn't like odd numbers." Virginia folk reciprocated by presenting the star with all manner of gifts, including a handknit wash cloth, 50 feet of concrete curbing, a pair of black suede shoes, two oil paintings, a live turkey, a wrist watch, apple jelly, and a Virginia ham.



BINGING AROUND

By Pete Cakanic

Elsewhere in this issue *Bingang* has started to reprint the Bing biography published in *Goldmine* last Christmas Eve. A beautiful sepia-tone rendering of Bing was on the cover. *Goldmine* is a tabloid-sized publication geared mostly to rock and roll and the post-rock era.

I wrote to author William Ruhlmann to compliment him and to ask about his background. In his response we learned that he is 38, lives in New York, and has been a music journalist for 11 years.

About his writing he says: "I cover the waterfront from the rock-oriented pop music with which I grew up to jazz, show music, and what's recently come to be called 'classic pop.' I suppose what unites my taste is an affection for good songs, whatever style they may be performed in."

He recently wrote the album notes for a Tommy Dorsey/Frank Sinatra box set released by RCA. Ruhlmann has urged RCA to come out with a Bing set but "can't report any definite progress" but suggests "maybe if *Bingang* readers wrote to Paul Williams at RCA in New York it might help."

I thought one of the standout paragraphs in the Bing bio is "Since his death, Crosby's stature has been diminished by *craven* biographers (one of them his son) who, on *specious* grounds have sought to tear down his reputation."

Not having Bing's vocabulary, I checked Webster for *craven*, learning it meant "cowardly," and *specious*: "seeming to be sound, correct, logical, etc., without really being so; plausible, but not genuine." It's a perfect description of *The Hollow Man*. Thanks, Bill.

I went channel surfing on D-Day and only heard one mention of Bing. Larry King had Maxene Andrews as a guest on his CNN show, and it seemed he expected Maxene to ditto Gary Crosby's harsh views, but she set him straight. "He was very nice to work with." Larry offered: "Bing Crosby was the voice of World War II."

Browsing through a Jackie Gleason biography, I came up with one more example of Bing's dry wit. Jackie, a pretty good pool hustler in real life, was shooting pool at the Friar's Club. Bing and a friend were watching as Jackie kept asking, "Who wants to be the next fish?" (In pool parlance a fish is an easy prey for a pool shark.)

The friend asked Bing, "Should I play him?" Bing advised, "I think you'd better go north to spawn."

It was a pity to see Dean Martin's recent photo in the supermarket tabloids, his once-handsome features wrinkled and his body withered. I've been a fan of

Dino's since I first heard him sing "If I Could Sing Like Bing, How Happy I Would Be—Boo Boo Boo" back in 1953.

I haven't seen any in-depth reviews of *Dino*, the Dean Martin biography published several years ago. It's a thick book with much of the copy, it appears, taken from court records involving contract suits, divorce proceedings, et al. The author, Nick Tosches, who has written for many major magazines and newspapers, including the *New York Times*, *Esquire*, and *Vanity Fair* does come up with some interesting information.

In summary, Roy Brown, a black singer who "idolized" Bing Crosby, recorded "Good Rockin' Tonight" in 1947. "The strongest chains are wrought from the unlikely alloys. Elvis would transform Roy Brown's 'Good Rockin' Tonight' into something new and apocalyptic, just as Roy Brown had forged his own fierce sound from Bing Crosby. And Elvis's favorite singer, the man he idolized, has passed through Crosby's shadow as well: Dean Martin. He would emulate Dean as Dean had emulated Crosby. In Dean's voice in 'Just For Fun' (Dean's first 45 rpm record) lay the source of Elvis's own."

In other places, Dean is quoted: "When a Bing movie came to Steubenville, I would stay there all day and watch. I learned from Crosby and so did Sinatra and Como. We all started imitating him." The author states: "Dino was not alone. No singer who came after Crosby would ever approach a microphone or a song without passing through Bing's shadow."

The first part is a good read, especially the prohibition and depression era sketches. The last two-thirds is a little tiresome unless you like rewritten court documents.

In case you missed it, we learned last fall that Bing Crosby as Dan Emmett did not write "Dixie" after all. According to a book from Smithsonian Institution Press, "Dixie," a fixture at southern political rallies for a hundred years, may have been written by a black family—yankees to boot. Mr. Emmett did make the song famous, but authors Howard and Judith Sacks allege that he learned the song from the Snowden family in his hometown of Mt. Vernon, Ohio.

Has anyone else heard a "Spaghetti Warehouse" radio commercial with a singer doing a fair imitation of Bing in Dixieland mode? I caught it on the radio in Knoxville, TN.

Long drives are good for catching up on long-forgotten tapes. One I recently reviewed had Skitch Henderson as host in a Bing tribute, and Skitch related how Bing suggested he not use his real name of Cedric. "So Bing was responsible for my switch of names."

According to a local news clip Bob Hope and the Four Tops were to appear at a community fund raiser in Charlotte, NC, and Mr. Hope would reminisce about Bing Crosby. Tickets were to cost \$850 for the dinner and \$50 for a concert.

I wrote to *60 Minutes* humorist Andy Rooney, who also writes a news column, hoping to enlist his aid in a Bing stamp when Bing turned 90 last year. In a column some weeks later, Andy wrote: "Someone reminded me this morning [hope it was me] that Bing Crosby would

have been 90 this month, but I didn't read about it in the paper. No American was better known most of his life—not to mention mine—than Bing Crosby. I'm not sure the memory of Bing is holding up as well as Elvis Presley's, and they died the same year, 1977." We thank you for your comment, Andy, but then the rest of the four-column article is about Arthur Godfrey, "the most thoroughly forgotten man in the history of television." No mention of postage stamps.

When the *Bing: His Legendary Years* CD box set came out, I had no problem buying it at a local "Best Buy" chain for an unbelievably low price of \$36. But I waited almost four months to be able to get the video of the same name. Very little of Bing is stocked in this area. In frustration, I went to the Augusta library to see how the leading newspaper, the *August Chronicle*, handled Bing's death in 1977. A two-column by six-inch photo was on page one and there was copy galore. Since Augusta is the home of the Masters golf classic, other sections noted "Bing Left Big Footprint On The World Of Golf" and "Golf Pioneers Mourn Loss Of Pioneer In The Game."

On the day of Bing's funeral the *Chronicle* ran a two-column by five inch editorial and in part said, "Give me your dreams, the brown-haired, blue-eyed crooner seemed to say, and I will return them to you beautiful and alive." The editorial praised his voice, his casual manner, reviewed his record, radio and screen success and ended with: "No greater tribute, we feel, can be paid to Bing Crosby than to say that the joy he brought to his audience spanned the barriers of language, custom and nationality."

However, the *Chronicle's* younger editors have forgotten. Last Thanksgiving in an "Ask Us" featurette

a reader asked, "What are some other Thanksgiving songs besides 'Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow'?" Answer: "Come Ye Thankful People All," "Gather Together," and "Over The River And Through The Woods."

I wrote to the column and reminded them that for over 40 years a great Irving Berlin tune, "I've Got Plenty To Be Thankful For," sung by Bing Crosby, has been appearing in *Holiday Inn* reruns on TV. A letter from the editor thanked me and said they might use that in 1994.

I would like to pay my respects to Ken Twiss, who took his own life last December. He had been ill for a long time, and it was his work in the Bing Crosby Historical Society that gave him the will to live. After B.C.H.S. folded, and because he failed to move the city of Tacoma to help with the B.C.H.S. funding, that was the straw that broke the camel's back. I believe Ken endured physical pain bravely, but he was making a statement to the city of Tacoma with his suicide, which is a matter of public record.

I feel a special kinship with Ken because he helped me get back into the Bing mode. Since in the early 60's I was raising two boys, finances did not allow for too many Bing purchases. Then, too, I was not overly fond of his mature singing. In the 1980's, with my boys now grown, I began buying Bing LPs. One of them listed the B.C.H.S. I wrote to Ken, and after about a year's exchange of letters, I, a traditional non-joiner after leaving the military, became a member of B.C.H.S. and all the other Bing groups because of Ken. He, unlike many of us, liked Bing's singing in his later days best, and suggested I listen to Bing's subtle phrasing and how smooth his low notes were in his older years. I did. He was right. God bless you, Ken, and thank you.

From Jim Johnson:

Dear Friends of Bing:

I had the privilege of hosting a Bing Crosby hour here in Hyde Park, N.Y. My guest host: [Club Crosby member] Joseph Sinnott, a friend and neighbor from Saugerties, NY. We will be doing this kind of show the first Sunday of the month. The listeners love it! Attached is an advertisement for the show.

**Listen to WHVW 950 AM
as we salute
BING CROSBY
on his 91st Birthday
SUNDAY, MAY 1st 10am - 11am**

Please note that Bing gets a lot of play on my Irish Show, heard every Sunday from 11:05 to 12:00 noon, on WHVW radio, 950 on the AM dial, Hyde Park, NY.

Time permitting, I plan on putting on a special Bing Crosby Hour. He'll be visited by Al Jolson, Kate Smith,

Cliff Edwards, Frank Sinatra, and a host of bands and vocalists. This type of show is sorely needed. I put together most of the shows here at the station, so you can bet it will happen. One other show I do is "Uncle Fred's Garage Sale." People can buy and sell free of charge. This show is heard every day at 12:06 P.M.

P.S. I'm a volunteer, putting in 22 hours a week or more if needed. Gordon Wall and Joe Sinnott were also guests on the Irish Show.

Good luck,
Jim Johnson
462 Plutarch Rd.
Highland, NY 12528

Q. Who was responsible for the first video-tape recorder?

A. Believe it or not, Bing Crosby. His ABC radio program shortly after World War II was the first to be recorded on audio tape, and he established Bing Crosby Laboratories to develop a television version. This was demonstrated for the first time in 1951; its picture quality was unsatisfactory. The first acceptable video-tape recorder was unveiled in 1956 by Ampex, the same company that made the audio-tape recorder that permitted Der Bingle to croon over ABC without being in the studio.

TV Guide 4-79

Bing in Hollywood

By David Lobosco

Anything Goes

(Paramount, 1956)

In 1936 Bing Crosby had made another movie with the same title and the same Cole Porter music, but it bore little resemblance to this version. Back then, Bing was emerging as the top star at Paramount. For the second version, Bing was twenty years older and was making his last movie for the studio. In my opinion, Bing went out with quite a bang!

Filled with bright Cole Porter songs, the film features Bing singing and dancing with Mitzi Gaynor and Donald O'Connor. Rounding out the cast is the French ballet dancer, Jeanmaire, and



Bing's old buddy, Phil Harris. Bing plays Bill Benson, a superstar on Broadway, who for his new show is teamed up with a cocky newcomer (O'Connor). Unknown to each other, both sign women for the one female lead role in their show. The rest of the film deals with the problems that Bing and Donald try to resolve. As always, their scheming blows up in their faces, and they almost end up with no female star at all.

The movie concludes with the typical happy ending. The female lead is reworked for two actresses, and both guys get their girls. Bing falls for Jeanmaire and O'Connor gets Mitzi Gaynor. The movie is a very commendable ending to Bing's long relationship with Paramount. However, I did not like the matching of Bing and Jeanmaire. I don't think they had enough chemistry together to make a believable pair.

Although the movie was not a critical success, the superb Cole Porter score includes a terrific version of the title song by Mitzi Gaynor, and the finale of "Blow, Gabriel, Blow" is living proof that Bing still had it at the age of 53 and could capture an audience more than Frank Sinatra or Elvis Presley ever could. Other Porter songs included are "I Get A Kick Out Of You," "You're The Top," "It's De-Lovely," "All Through The Night," and "Dream Ballet." Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen provided three extra songs for the film ("Ya Gotta Give The People Hoke," "You Can Bounce Right Back," and "A Second-Hand Turban And A Crystal Ball"). Leo Robin and Frederick Hollander wrote two other songs that were cut, called "Am I Awake" and "Hopelessly In Love."

With the premiere of "Anything Goes" on March 21, 1956, Bing ended his 24-year reign as Paramount's top star. He was and always will be "the tops." Cole Porter could not have written it any better than that!

BING: **HIS LEGENDARY YEARS, 1931-1957**

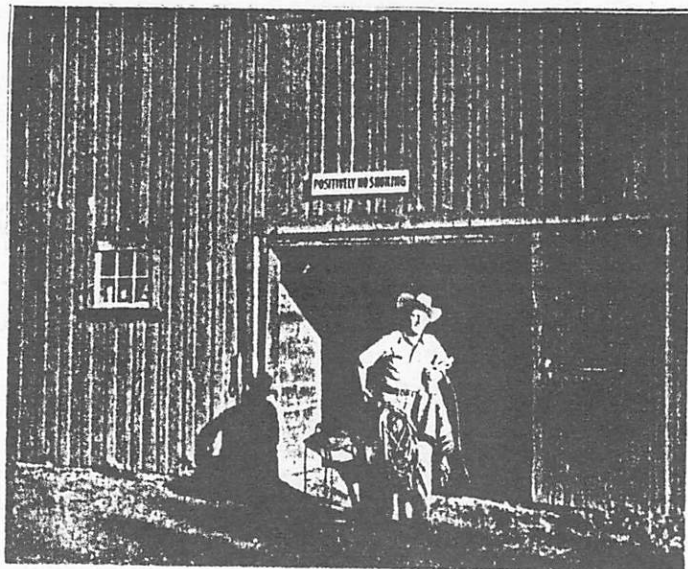
Bing Crosby

Not just a nostalgiafest but a vital musical treat, this four-CD set includes most of the 21 Crosby tracks that sold a million copies as singles during his trail-blazing career. (Missing is the singer's earlier work before he began recording for Decca, ancestor of today's MCA.)

Crosby's jazz influences are particularly apparent in this extraordinarily clean collection, not only in his casual, rhythmically urgent singing style but also in his frequent collaborations with such jazz bands as Woody Herman's Woodchoppers and the Bobcats, a Dixieland group fronted by Bing's brother Bob. The album also includes duets with first wife Dixie Lee, his eldest (and later most estranged) son, Gary, and film costar Mary Martin.

This set is the ideal antidote for those who recall Bing only as a dysfunctional father and wearer of a bad hairpiece. He's not just the guy who made the pop culture safe for Sinatra and Presley. He was the creator of pop music that remains consistently entertaining. (MCA) ■ RALPH NOVAK

From "People" Magazine
February 14, 1994
Courtesy of David Lobosco



THE DAY BEGINS EARLY at Bing's big ranch, but Bing's at the cookhouse for breakfast (at 6:00) and ready to saddle Thunder and take off on a tour of inspection shortly afterward.

60 miles north of

This 4th installment in Caroline Dawson's continuing series on Bing's residences features an article about his Elko, Nevada ranch by Joseph Heppner.



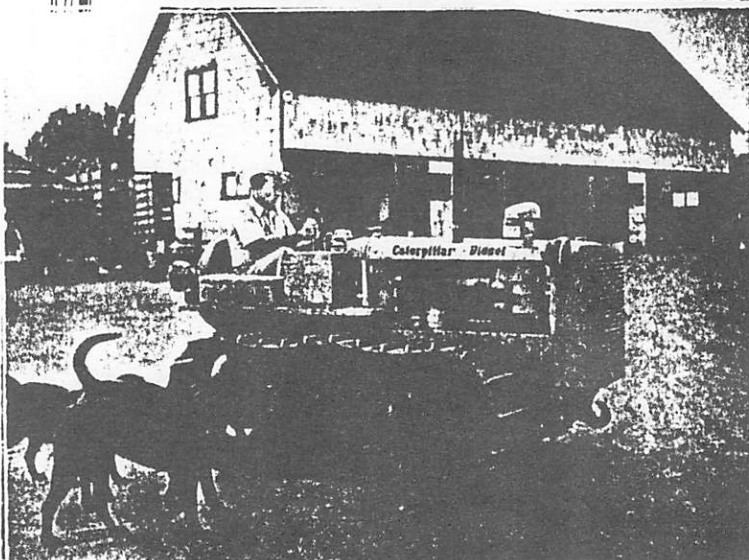
Bing Crosby Forgets All About

Hollywood and Show Business the Minute

He Arrives at His Big Spring Creek

Ranch. Here He Talks Cattle and Horses;

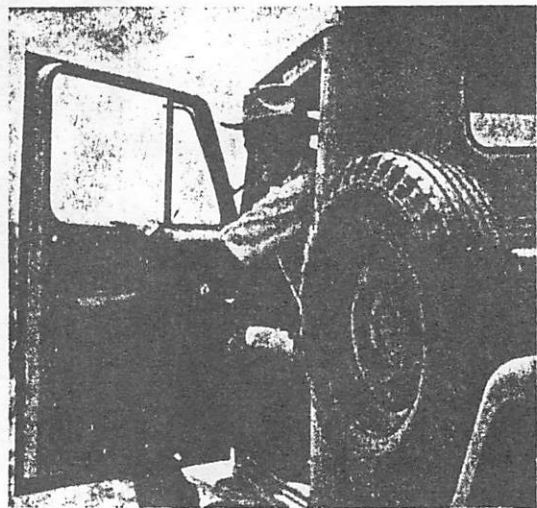
Rides the Range; Goes Fishing



ODD JOBS, such as testing a tractor which had just come from the ranch's fully-equipped machine shop, usually fall to Bing's lot when he's around. Gary was the villain in this case; in his exuberance he had stripped the machine's gears.



THERE ARE 175 head of horses on the ranch, from which Bing has chosen Thunder, at left, for himself. The ranch's big business, however, is in cattle, and 3500 head of Herefords last year bore the PX brand.



THOUGH the Paramount star doesn't fly himself, he often drives over to the ranch's airstrip to meet an incoming visitor. Ranch's two-seater plane is used to inspect acreage and for dropping feed, messages.

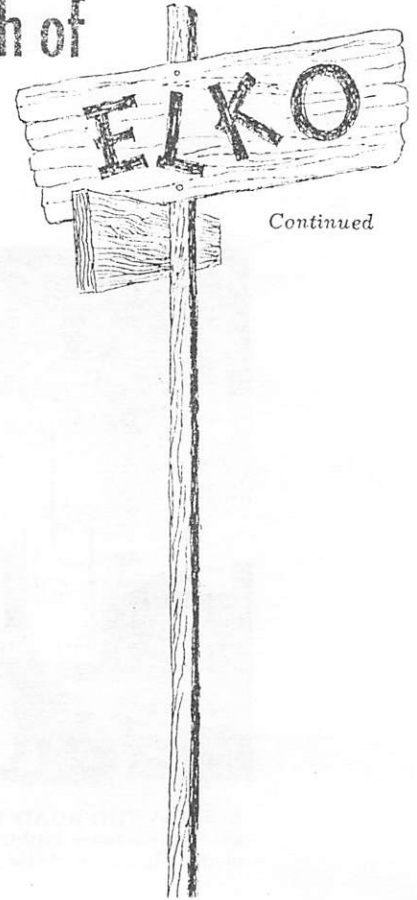


NEIGHBORS to the north (a mere 20 miles away) are the forest ranger and his wife, and Bing seldom misses a visit with them (above). At right, he's depositing a sackful of mail in the ranch's outgoing box. Its mate, for incoming mail, is on the other side of the road, to make mailman's work easy.

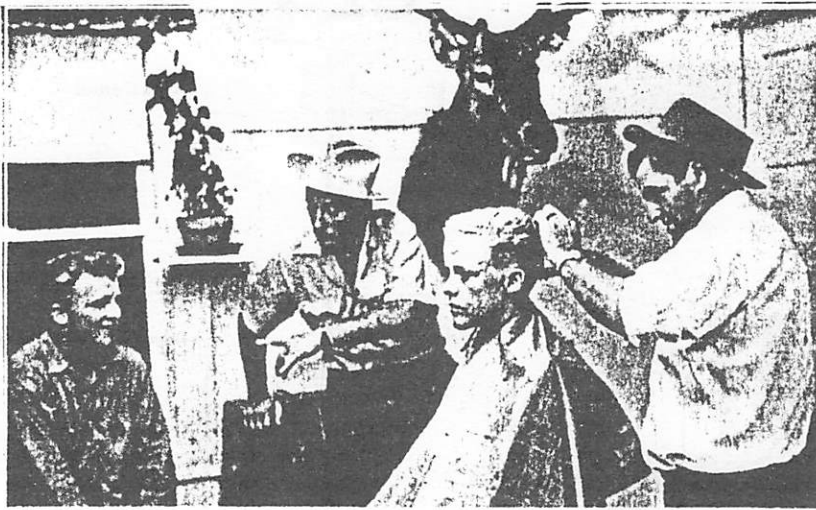




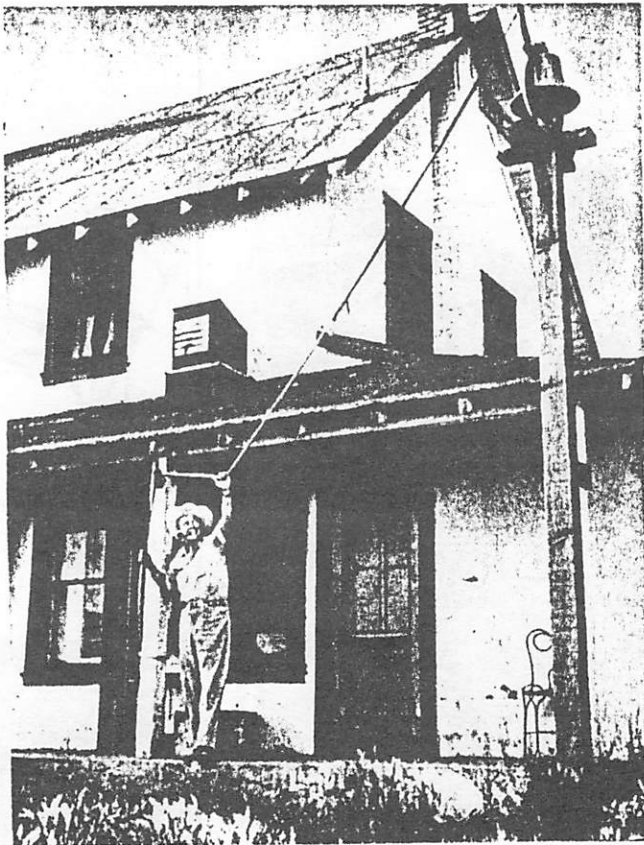
60 miles north of



Continued



THE MINUTE their school is out in the spring, the four young Crosbys head for Spring Creek, where they do day-laborers' work—and get day-laborers' pay—for most of the summer. Only on a rainy day, when they don't get paid anyway, do they take time out for hair-cutting. Above, Lindsay in chair; Gary watching.

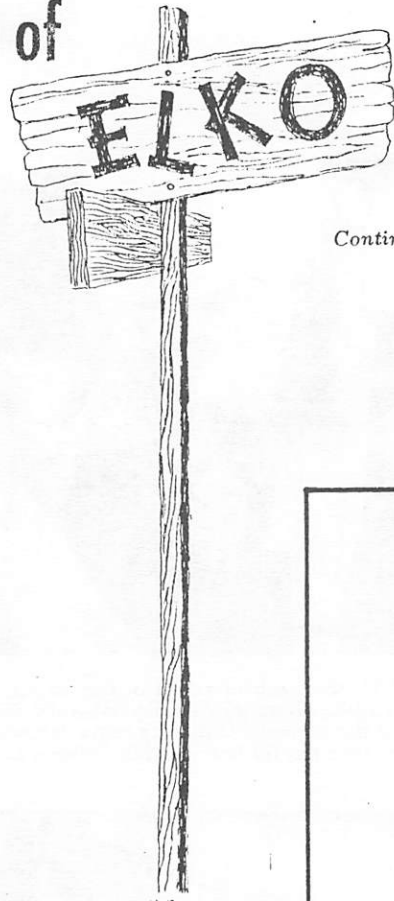


FRESH AIR and hard work make everyone hungry, and a single clap of the bell outside the cookhouse is usually enough. Dinner, the big meal of the day, is at 11:30 a.m.; supper at 5 p.m. Meals, served in cookhouse, are long on food, short on style.



STAR of Mr. Music and Lindsay, the youngest, live in the big house, but eat in the cookhouse with the ranch foreman and his wife. A second table is occupied by hands working nearby.

60 miles north of



Continued



ACROSS THE ROAD from the main house—a comfortable seven-room building—are the bunk houses for permanent hands, with totem pole presented to "Chief" Bing.

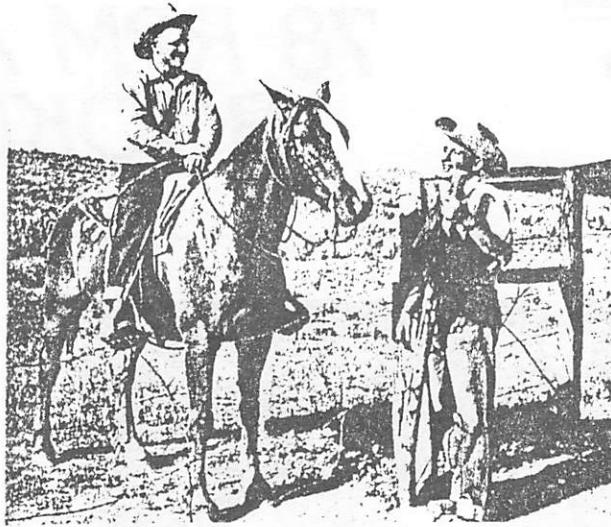


RESERVOIR he built after buying five ranches and turning them into one of the finest in Elko County provides Bing with sport as well as water. Game is plentiful, too, but hunting is strictly forbidden.



MOUNTAIN TROUT make fine eating, and Bing can look forward to a mess of them any time he swaps his rough ranch shoes for wading boots and throws out a few flies. Even golf is second to fishing.





VISITS to the five camps which are open during the summer mean visits to the three older boys. Above, with Gary, who worked as a wrangler and lived at the cattle camp, getting to the big house only on Sundays.



LIKE BOYS everywhere, the Crosby kids quarrel among themselves, with Gary siding with Lindsay against the twins. Philip, left, and Dennis never miss a chance to complain to dad about Lindsay's soft job.



BING takes all complaints with a grain of salt—and a tin cupful of water from one of the streams flowing through the ranch. He bought place as an investment; now hopes one son will be a rancher.

78 RPM ALBUM BOOKLETS



Accompanied by

Eddie Dunstedter at the Organ
Victor Young and his Orchestra
John Scott Trotter and his Orchestra
John Scott Trotter's Frying Pan Five
Jimmy Dorsey and his Orchestra

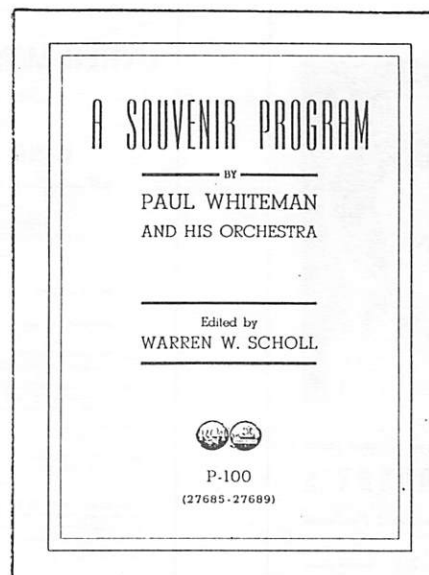
DECCA ALBUM No. A-69

Often taken for granted as Crosby collectibles are the information booklets that came inside Decca and Victor 78 rpm album sets. Gathered together as they are here, they make quite an impressive mini-collection of Crosbyana. Besides mirroring (in most cases) the album's cover, the Decca booklets usually contained a biography of Bing, comments about the songs and their composers, notes on the movie if the set was film related, and a listing of current and available Crosby recordings. You'll note that in at least two cases, Decca issued different versions of the booklets for the same album, probably when the information inside was changed or updated. The Victor sets, on the other hand, contained records and discographical information relative to some of Bing's earliest recordings while a member of the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. More often than not, these booklets were missing from the second-hand albums I bought, so I count myself lucky to have put together such a representative collection over the years.

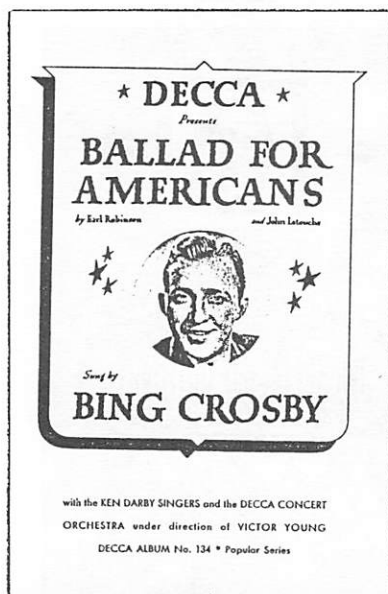
M. S.



Victor No. P-4



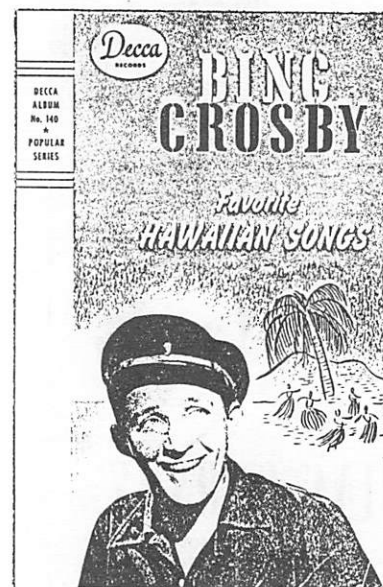
Victor No. P-100



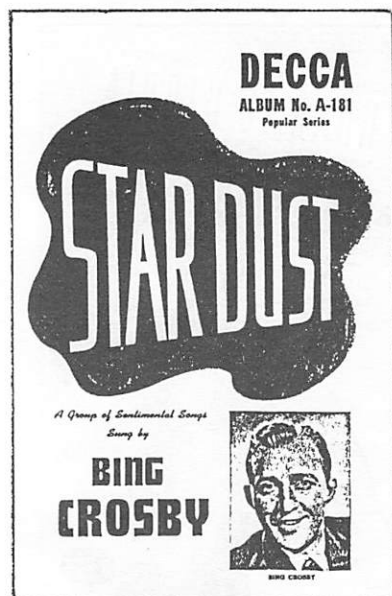
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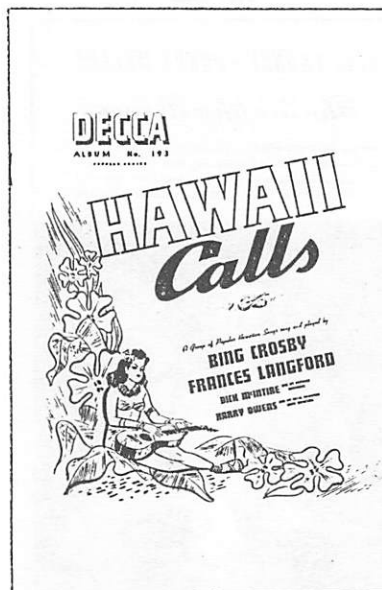
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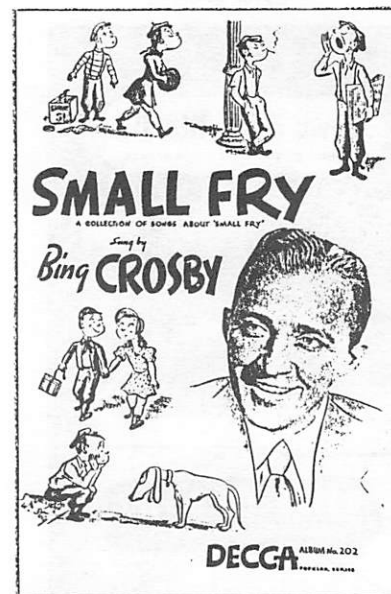
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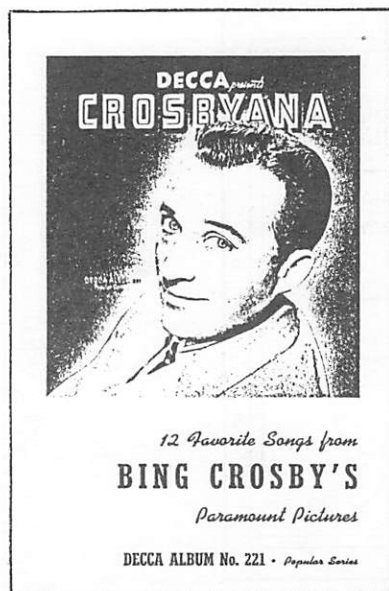
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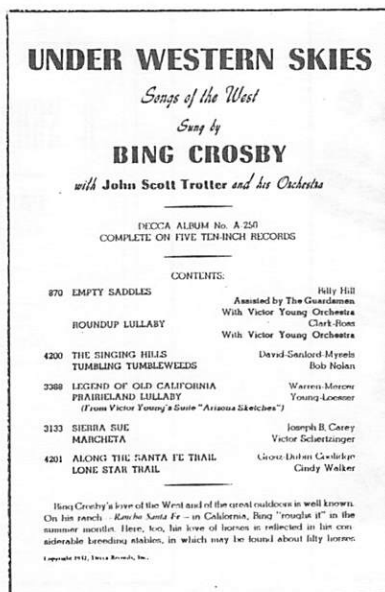
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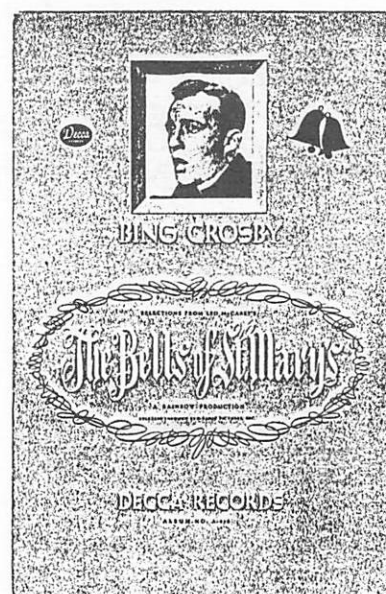
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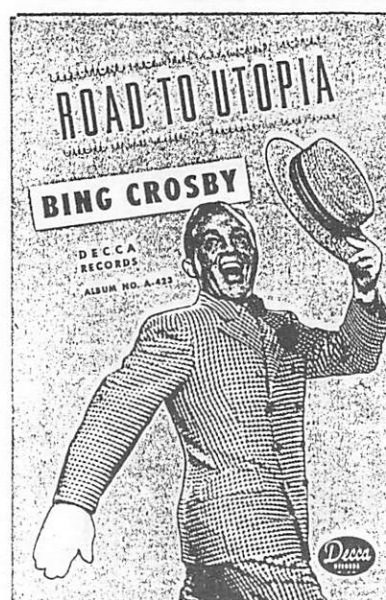
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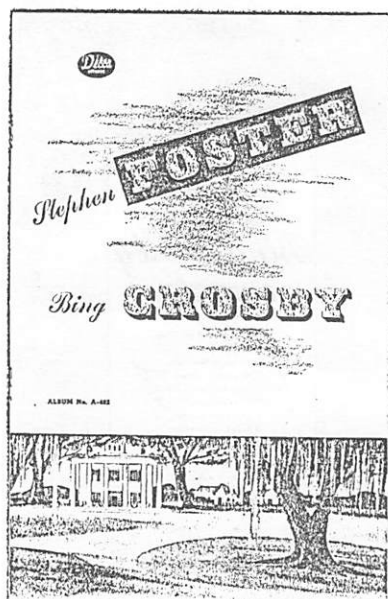
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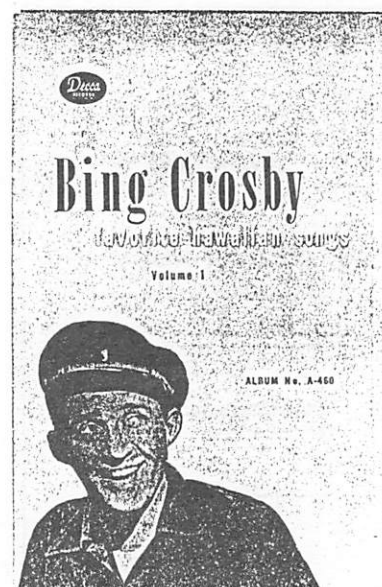
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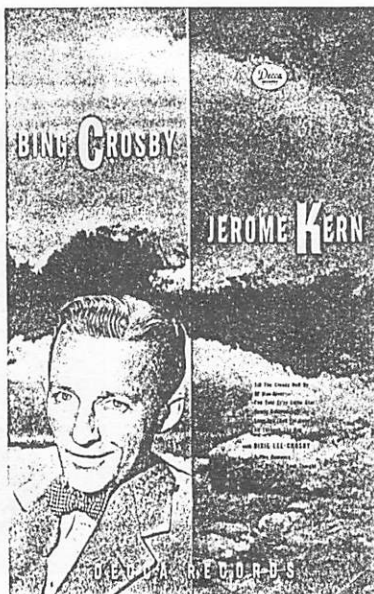
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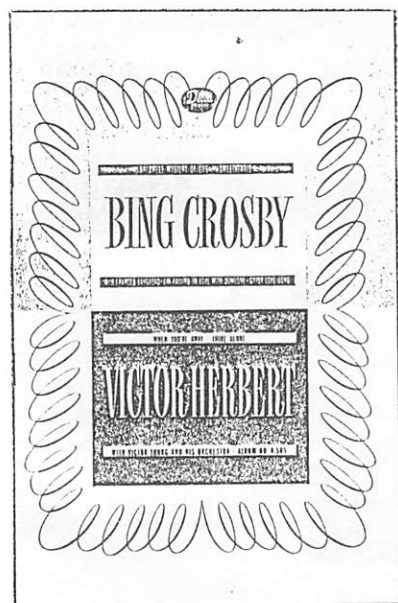
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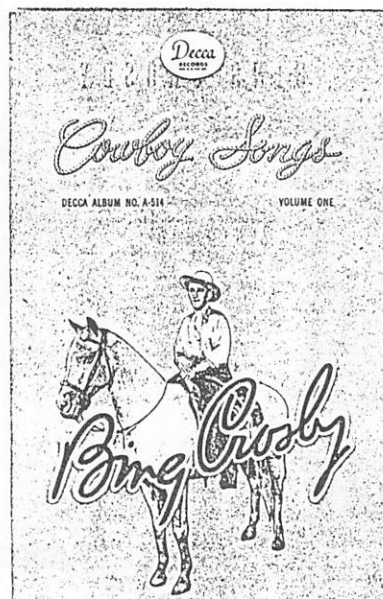
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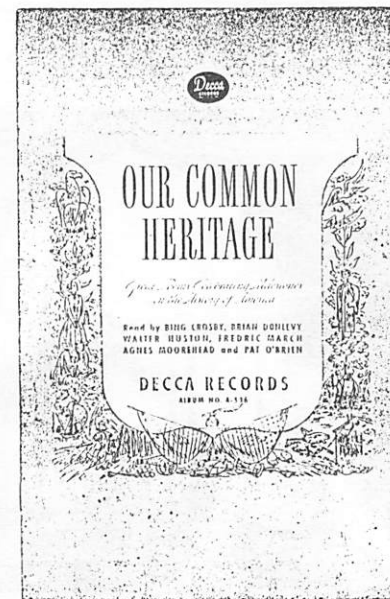
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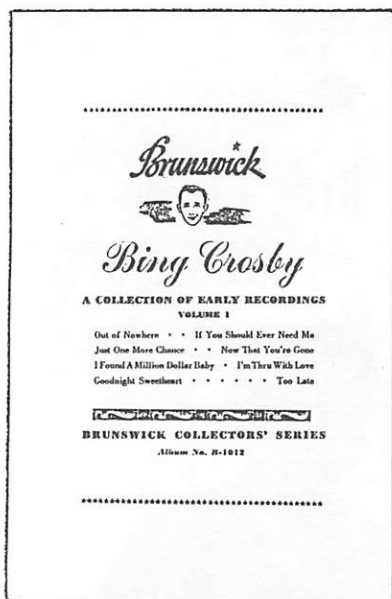
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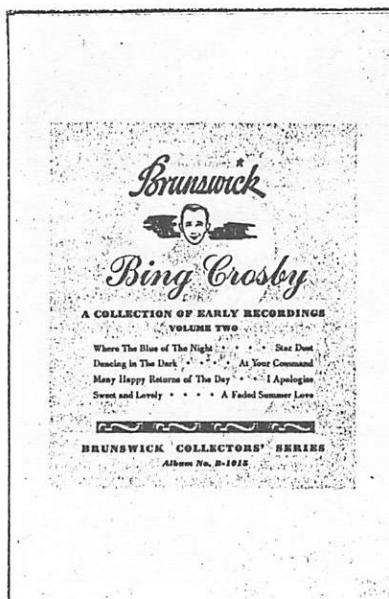
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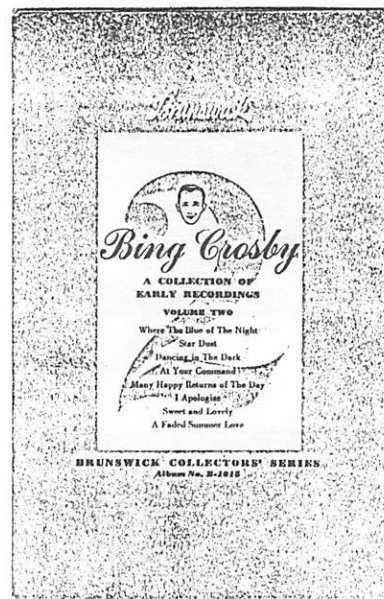
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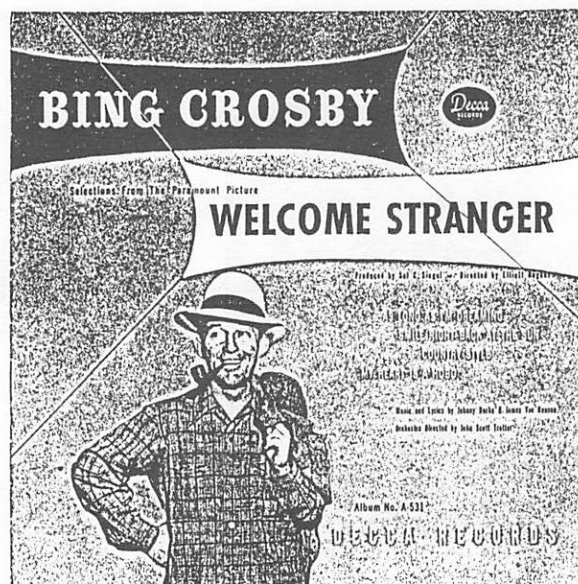
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No. B-1015

As an article in a previous issue explained, Decca came into possession of some of Bing's early Brunswick masters. The booklets shown above are from two albums of reissues of this material. Just before they began pasting the liner notes inside the front covers of their albums, Decca for some reason changed the booklets to a new square format. After 1947 they were eliminated completely. The "Man Without A Country" booklet is unique to the rest of those pictured because it is from an album containing 12-inch records.

M.S.



No. 531



No. 553



No. DAU-3

A Letter to the Stamp Committee By Steven W. Lewis

Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee
475 L'Enfant Plaza S. W.
Washington, DC 20260-6753

Dear Committee Members:

Thank you for your recent decision to issue a stamp commemorating the life and times of the Old Groaner, Bing Crosby. I learned of the Crosby stamp in the most recent issue of *Bingang*, the magazine of the Club Crosby, the oldest continuous "fan club" in America today. According to the *Bingang* announcement, the Crosby stamp will be attached to four other stamps honoring Al Jolson, Ethel Waters, Nat Cole and Ethel Merman. I know and respect the work of all these performers, but I believe Bing — and the generation that loved Bing — deserves an issue dedicated exclusively to Bing like the recent one for Elvis.

Although I was born long after World War II, I inherited my parents' love for Bing. I know of no other entertainer that excelled in more areas than Bing. Perhaps this is why *Life* magazine chose Bing in 1990 as one of the 100 most influential people of the 20th century. Here are some of his accomplishments:

- He sold more records during his lifetime (1904-1977) than any other artist or group.
- He starred in more than 50 movies, 23 of which were among the top 10 box office hits in the years of their release.
- He was among the top 10 box office stars for at least 15 years, and was the leading box office draw each year from 1944 through '48.
- He won an Oscar as best actor of 1944 and was nominated again for best actor in 1954.
- He was the star of a weekly prime-time network radio show from 1931 through 1954.
- He developed the concept of the professional-amateur golf tournament to benefit charity beginning in 1937.
- He raised millions of dollars for charities through his golf tournaments, holiday recordings and personal appearances.

It is no secret that Bing wasn't the best movie actor when he won his Oscar for best actor in 1945. He won because Americans loved him. He won because he had become a special symbol to Americans during the war. *The New York Times* referred to Bing last December 8 as "the voice of America in World War II."

Let's honor this man and the generations who idolized him appropriately before they are all dead and gone!

Respectfully,
Steven W. Lewis

Bill Fowler Sings Bing's Music

Member Bill Fowler has been active in the Louisville, KY area for many years in music, singing with big bands and combos. The audience over the years has been shrinking, so they don't perform as much as they used to. Since Bill has retired from his "day job" as an electrical engineer, he has gotten into performing for the forgotten people in retirement homes. We hasten to add *not* nursing homes. His performances are directed exclusively to the music of Bing Crosby. Using a drummer with brushes and snare and an electric bass and Bill himself with a baritone uke, it has gone over surprisingly well. He wears an old hat, with pipe and golf club, and the people love it.

Bill reports that the men and women they play for love Bing Crosby, and they know just about every song he ever sang. In fact, they just can't quite get enough and are always anxious for the group to come back. The folks who lived through the wonderful Bing years have not lost their love and admiration for him and his talents.



Bing on Station WJUX

Ernest Sutkowski reports that radio station WJUX, 103.1 FM, Bergen County, NJ—a new station, perhaps a year and a half or so in business—is catering to good music, often rarely heard recordings. Ernie has been pleased with the variety of Bing's recordings they air.

As you know, Ernie's company sponsors "The Songs of Bing Crosby" on WRTN, 93.5 FM, New Rochelle, NY on Thursdays, 10-11 a.m.

You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet!

From the collection of member Marilee Stankowski come these most interesting copies of the English and Australian sheet music for "The Spaniard That Blighted My Life." Recorded on March 25, 1947 and released on American Decca red label 40038, this song plus another Jolson chestnut, "Alexander's Ragtime Band," were the only formal recordings that Bing and Al ever made together. No American sheet music commemorating this once-in-a-lifetime session are known to exist, thus making these two foreign sheets real rarities. Thanks for sharing them, Marilee!

—M. S.

THE SPANIARD THAT BLIGHTED MY LIFE (HE SHALL DIE)



RECORDED BY
BING CROSBY
AND
AL JOLSON
ON
DECCA Y 6044

ALSO SUNG BY
CHARLES ZOLI



WRITTEN AND
COMPOSED BY
BILLY MERSON



J. ALBERT & SON LTD.
MUSIC PUBLISHERS
MELBOURNE SYDNEY WELLINGTON, N.Z.

PUBLISHED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH
FRANCIS, DAY & HUNTER LTD. LONDON
AUTHORISED FOR SALE ONLY IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

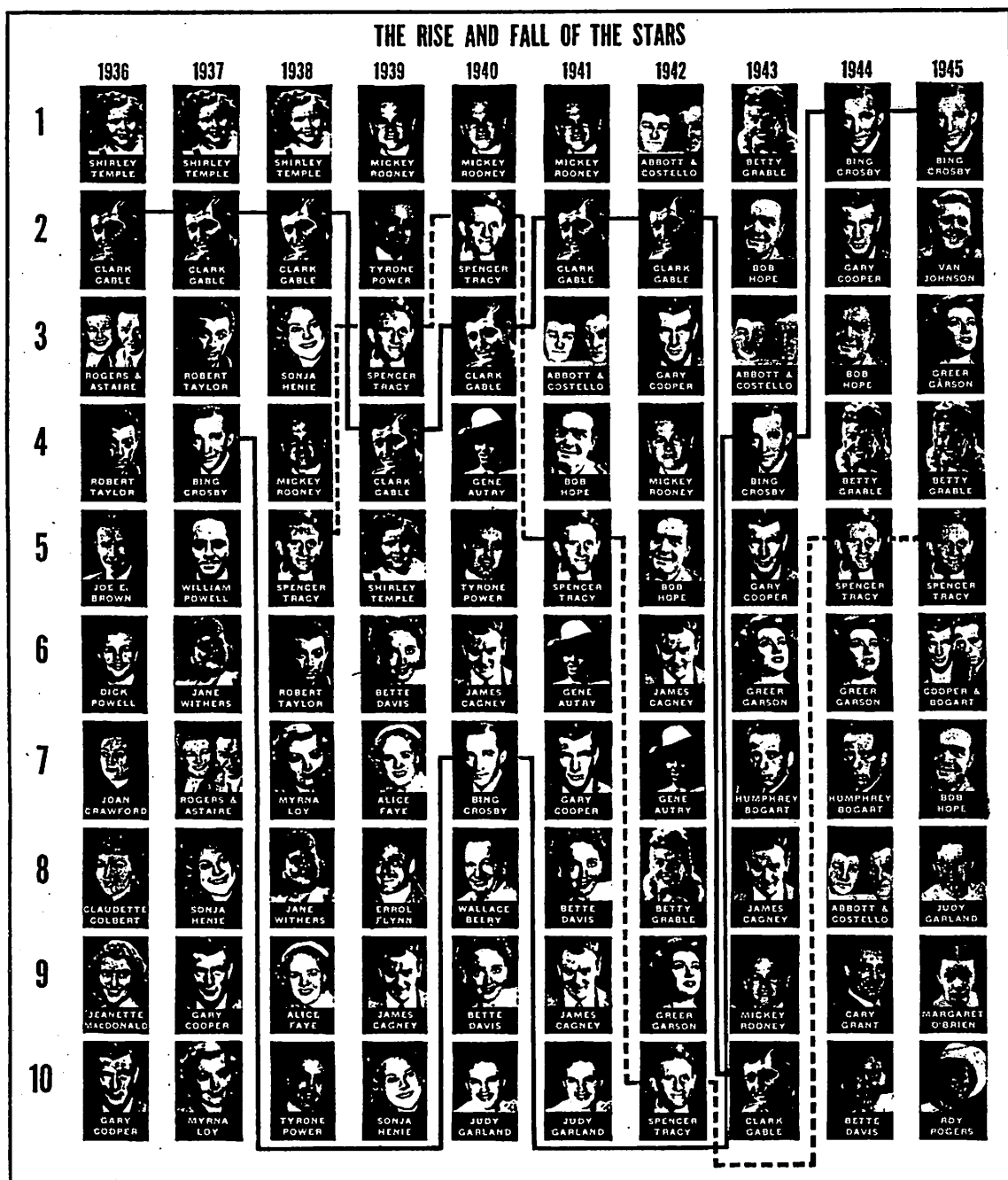
The Spaniard that Blighted My Life

Words · E. Music · by —
BILLY · MERSON ·



FRANCIS DAY & HUNTER LTD
138-140 CHARING CROSS ROAD,
LONDON · W.C. 2.

The caption underneath the picture reads: "Al Jolson, Bing Crosby and Jack Kapp in the recording studios of Decca Recording, Inc. when making Brunswick 03783."



THIS CHART SHOWS THE TEN BIGGEST BOX-OFFICE STARS IN EACH OF THE LAST 10 YEARS. LINES SHOW HOW A FEW HAVE WAXED AND WANED IN POPULARITY

THE MOVIES

1936 STARS HAVE LASTED WELL
BUT NEW FACES ARE COMING UP

Each year the *Motion Picture Herald*, a prominent movie trade paper, publishes a list of the 10 stars who have drawn the most paid admissions during the preceding 12 months. The chart above shows who these people have been during the past 10 years. The fact that 100 places are filled by 36 faces is a tribute to the continued popularity of actors like Clark Gable and Bing Crosby; of actresses like Shirley Temple and Greer Garson.

Yet many great Hollywood stars are not represented. Ingrid Bergman, who will undoubtedly be 1946's top female money-maker, does not appear. Neither does the late Carole Lombard, nor Ronald Colman, nor Katharine Hepburn, nor James Stewart. Instead there is a cowboy named Autry, two clowns named Abbott and Costello, an ice-skater named Henie. Whatever their talents, however, the golden 36 were the era's most popular entertainers.

This graph from the Nov. 25, 1946 issue of Life Magazine charts ten years of box office champs. Of course, it only shows the beginning of Bing's phenomenal five-year run as the nation's number one film star. You'll note that his competition for this honor was not too shabby.

--M. S.

CROSBY MOVES IN HIGH SOCIETY

by Harry
Kurnitz



Bing Crosby: A miracle of gently aged charm and relaxation.

■ Friends ... are you tense, tired, tied up in tight knots of anxiety? Friends ... does sleep elude you, making you toss and turn during an entire double feature? Friends ... do you mutter hopelessly, "If this picture doesn't end in three minutes, I'll kill myself?"

Friends ... do not ignore these symptoms because *you* may be suffering from CHAYEFSKY, your doctor's name for certain diseases induced by overexposure to retreaded TV dramas, and here's good news. Friends, medical science now has help for you. Crosby. Yes, Friends, Bing Crosby, the modern miracle relaxer, containing no harsh tars or other irritants, only pure established trust fund and blue-chip stocks. And, Friends, Crosby is available right now in M-G-M's brightly colored two-hour economy package, *High Society*.

With producers going as far back as *Beowulf* and *McGuffey's Reader* for subjects to be remade into musicals, it was inevitable, I suppose, that someone would hit upon Philip Barry's play, *The Philadelphia Story*. It has been lifted bodily from its old Main Line setting and put down lightly in Newport, where a Jazz Festival seems to be taking place. Grace Kelly plays the cool goddess who gets her pedestal clipped, Bing Crosby is the hero, and Frank Sinatra and Celeste Holm are the brash reporters who precipitate matters. The new show has been handsomely produced by Sol C. Siegel, and fluently directed by Charles Walters from a bright new screenplay by John Patrick. These massive and expensive talents are augmented by an exhilarating score by Cole Porter and the results are very enjoyable. All the principals seem to adopt the "no muss, no fuss" doctrine laid down by Doctor Crosby and appear to great advantage. Sinatra, always an ingratiating performer, is particularly attractive in this one and Miss Kelly, now that she has become a Foreign Power, leaves us indisputable proof that she was on the verge of blossoming into a comedienne of considerable skill and great beauty when she was summoned to her Imperial Destiny.

But Bing is Bing, which seems rather a mystifying statement now that I have written it and we are fortunate

to have space at our disposal for a fuller analysis.

Harry Lillis Crosby (I also know the real names of Piper Laurie, Race Gentry and Lassie) has had a rich, colorful career, collecting honors and cash awards all along the line with the baffling serenity of a working yogi. In the dear dead days of sound broadcasting ("radio," I think they called it), when crazed and desperate men fought themselves and each other for Hooper and Crosley ratings, Bing did no more than slouch through a half hour of somnolent charm, his unruffled poise soothing even the most savage sponsor. In the movie business, that somewhat different pressure cooker, wherein even well-balanced check their belts and shoelaces before entering the premises, Crosby has on occasion achieved states of relaxation so profound that nervous directors find it reassuring to hold a mirror to his lips to test for moisture before the cry of "Action!" He is not yet committed to regular appearances in television but when and if he is I am prepared to guarantee that his own corner of the jungle will instantly take on the contemplative calm of Walden Pond. Having ambled to the top in all media, he has balanced there, apparently quite without effort, for a quarter of a century and I know of only one comparable, competing statistic: Fred Astaire, now appearing in a movie version of George and Ira Gershwin's *Funny Face* with Audrey Hepburn, played exactly the same part in 1927, when, at the age of two, I saw the show at the Shubert Theater in Philadelphia. Mr. Astaire, however, does work up an occasional sweat in a dance number, whereas my candidate, Iron-Man Crosby, is pressing hard for the record without having turned a hair. (What happened to the hair, under these circumstances, is a mystery; but other magazines with other standards are better equipped for this type of exposé.)

I have heard Crosby's performances (if that is indeed what they are) discussed by puzzled thespians, many of them advocates of Stanislavsky and The Method, and the consensus seems to be that he no actor at all. Since his voice, a disembodied, sepulchral baritone of mystify-

ing origins, hardly qualifies him to be called a singer, where does that leave us? It leaves us, luckily, in the company of one of the most agreeably poised entertainers in the world, whose deftness and believability, in song or in story, are an asset to any branch of show business. His batting eye with dialogue is uncanny and it is a joy to watch the precision with which he throws away the bad lines and belts the good ones far back into the mezzanine without noticeably altering his stance or delivery. He sings, or whatever it he does in those moments, with a fine feeling for the structure of a song and a nice respect for its lyrics. He is a past master of the difficult art of slipping gracefully into a number and is seemingly as surprised as the rest of us by the materialization of Johnny Green and sixty studio musicians in some woodland bower or in an eighteen-foot skiff. As must be apparent by now, he has given me much pleasure since the old days of baby-kicking with the lamented W. C. Fields and I now respectfully suggest that he is ready for Bigger Things. Sealed bids will accordingly be accepted from solvent studios for my musical adaptation of *King Lear*, tentatively titled *Father Was a Jerk*, and if Mr. Crosby balks at undertaking this monumental assignment it should only be necessary to point out to him that *Lear* never wears a necktie and shuffles about through most of the action in hideously old clothes.

In *High Society* (we are back on the track now and return-trip tickets will be collected in a moment) the amiable Crosby inertia is turned on at full force and it blends with the associated talents to make a very good picture. The story contains only the bare minimum of embarrassing foolishness, as is legally required of screen musicals for licensing purposes here and abroad, and more than a modicum of wit and taste. To record one finicky technical dissent, The Holiday Award for the

Restoration of Old Masters goes this month to William Tuttle, the make-up man who lacquered and enameled Crosby, Sinatra, and Miss Kelly all into one implausible sub-deb grouping.

The songs by Cole Porter, who is justly famous for exactly this sort of work, are of a very high order and in Crosby and Sinatra he has two powerful and appealing interpreters, with Celeste Holm and *Kapellmeister* Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong only a notch behind these titans. They sing solo, in duet, in oddly assorted clumps, and in one moonlit flashback Miss Kelly raises her own or some store-bought pipes in graceful harmony with Bing. The background music, usually overpowering in this kind of show, is tasteful and discreet.

The late Louis Calhern, Margalo Gillmore and Sidney Blackmer make plausible appearances in supporting roles, and John Lund, as the stuffy, fatheaded fiancé, deserves a stunt check for what is required of him. But then somebody has to play the stuffy, fatheaded fiancé or—perish the thought!—we might have no screen musicals at all.

All the conversation, blended from Barry and John Patrick (with an assist from Donald Ogden Stewart, who, if memory serves, wrote the original screenplay), is generally witty, plausible and more or less suited to the high-class characters and backgrounds. The biggest laugh, though rudely and perhaps unfairly yanked out of context for reproduction here, is Miss Kelly's haughty observation: "Reporters at my wedding? Really, mother!"

"How all occasions do inform against me," murmurs Prince Hamlet in a plaintive moment, and Miss Kelly, if anybody is listening nowadays, is entitled to echo the sentiment.

From *Holiday*, September 1956. The type has been reset without editorial changes.



hollywood palace

BING CROSBY, who was the first guest host on *Hollywood Palace*, is again set for a series of appearances this season. Bing was born in Tacoma, Washington, on May 2, 1904, got his start as a drummer for a group called the Musicaladers. He landed his first singing job with Paul Whiteman, was first seen on the screen in *The Big Broadcast* of 1932. Bing, whose real name is Harry Lillis Crosby, has four sons by his first wife, Dixie Lee (who died in '52), two boys and a girl by Kathy Grant. He won an Oscar in 1944 for *Going My Way*.

Note: Florence Henderson, left, with Bing on *Palace* can be seen in *The Brady Bunch*.

Classical Singing



Sinatra, Crosby, and Fitzgerald as Objets d'Art

BY GARY GIDDINS

Early radios, TVs, hi-fis were frequently designed to camouflage electronic entertainment as furniture, often in huge cabinets with closing doors. As hardware became more functional, software grew increasingly self-conscious and grand. Records and videocassettes were marketed as objets d'art, clothed and boxed, with booklets and photographs and, in at least one famous instance of the 1950s, Bing Crosby's *A Musical Autobiography*, a lock and key, presumably to stop intruders from accessing your personal "White Christmas." During the overlapping years of the waning LP and ascending CD, the word Complete was stamped on ever larger crates, enclosing whole careers and even labels. But 'tis the season to be acquisitive, and two record companies have outdone themselves yet again.

Indeed, Columbia/Legacy's *Frank Sinatra: The Columbia Years 1943-1952 The Complete Recordings* is almost software as furniture. Twelve CDs and a cloth-covered 144-page book are encased in a double-tiered blue-black maplewood cabinet, 11 1/4 inches high and six inches wide, with a removable brush-glass door on which the singer's youthful image is engraved. In contrast, consider Verve's Zen-like *Complete Ella Fitzgerald Song Books*. Here, in a cloth-covered red box with an etching of the great lady, are a matching 120-page book and the eight original songbooks—16 CDs in their original grand garb, but miniaturized. Verve has done for Ella what Oxford did for the OED, only without the requisite magnifying glass. Your visitors will gravitate to the Sinatra as to a handsome credenza, while the Fitzgerald is a Limoges box, its tiny wonders to be examined with bemused astonishment.

Of course, both exhibits house music, and at some point you will want to explore that as well. But wait a while. These albums do not exist in a vacuum, nor is it accidental that the king and queen of the golden age of song should be subjects of reverential design. An era isn't passing, it's gone—and now comes classicism. Perhaps the great songs and performers really will abide with future generations as the great music of the last century abides with us, inspiring and mocking the living. The enthusiasm with which we embrace music we once rejected mixes homage and mourning, and the pathos is underscored by those surviving masters who attempt to fold back the years, some more successfully than others.

Fitzgerald and Carmen McRae are sidelined by illness. Joe Williams, who belongs as much to blues as pop, can still stop the clock, as can Peggy Lee, when she is hale enough to perform. Tony Bennett and Rosemary Clooney, the babies of the bunch, are routinely covered in glory.

And Sinatra is now represented not only by the first comprehensive look at his early solo career as a light-baritone balladeer, but by his first new album in nearly a

decade, one that signals a painful decline while marking the unbridgeable gulf between his generation and ours.

Maybe we needed the distance to hear the Columbias fresh. Not until the last of these sessions, when he was humiliated with trashy songs ("Mama Will Bark," costarring Dagmar and an animal impressionist, was the nadir; Sinatra palpitates with rage), did he also begin to unveil his mature phase in numbers like "The Birth of the Blues" and "Azure-Te." Elsewhere he's the moonstruck troubadour, forever gazing at the light in the window—"I Fall in Love Too Easily," he sings, woebegone, and "I'm a Fool To Want You," rueful and doomed. Those are among the most moving ballad performances ever recorded, so perfectly heartrending you can almost miss the exquisite craftsmanship.

Because the Sinatra Capitols have dominated the imagination of his admirers since the 1950s, everything before has come to be regarded as dated apprenticeship. It isn't just his early vulnerability that distances us, but the arrangements, with their lavish Axel Stordahl strings and trademark harp arpeggios. The whole effect defines a remote musical era—sentimental, yes, but also soberingly direct. The Capitols, contemporaneous with Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry, share rock and roll's exultation in defying the restraints imposed on a generation accustomed to privation and war. The Columbias are young, hopeful, and halting—except in the phrasing. Sinatra may not have known who he was, but he knew what he was doing. How remarkably cognizant he was of Crosby throughout these sessions. Crosby provided him with much of his repertoire—though if Bing did them fast, Frank did them slow, and if Bing did them slow, Frank would swing them. Yet hearing these recordings in chronological order, you realize how loath Columbia was to let him swing at all. Except for "Saturday Night," he doesn't get a single rhythm number until the 1946 "Two Hearts Are Better Than One," three years into his contract.

The Columbia Years was obviously a labor of loving devotion for producer Didier Deutsch and is essential for Sinatraphiles. But this is a Legacy product, so expect a few complaints. For one thing, it isn't complete (several master takes and a couple of sessions of duplicated material are reportedly slated for another disc next year). The digital transfers from original acetates occasionally amplify distortion. The book doesn't complement Will Friedwald's exhaustively researched chronology with a discography; you have to go to each jewel box for that. (For a general-purpose Sinatra discography, *Sinatra: The Man and His Music*, by Ed O'Brien and Scott P. Sayers, published by TSD Press in Austin, Texas, can be commended even though it insanely omits all personnel.)

Sinatra has always been publicly respectful of Crosby, who gave him a hand up when he first went out to Hollywood, but one night backstage at the Paramount the young prince told Johnny Mercer, "I'll sing his ass off," expressing a rivalry that turned into a national competition as high schools across the country held Crosby/Sinatra elections. Der Bingle's reputation like jazz withering in the 1960s, to the point that only his jazz recordings were acclaimed (and even many of those were never reissued) and the rest dismissed as nostalgia. That's turning around. MCA's Andy McKaie hasn't seen fit to erect a marble arch, but he authorized a four-CD box, *Bing: His Legendary Years 1931-1957* (annotated by the invaluable Friedwald), which in tandem with a charming documentation by Bryan Johnson to be aired on the Disney network this month aims to spur a reexamination. If the film's declaration that Crosby was the Mick Jagger of 1926 jumps the gun by a few years, the continuing rhythmic vitality and emotional force of his music is undeniable and was sublimely proven by Rosemary Clooney in her triumphant tribute to Crosby at Carnegie Hall on November 1.

Crosby's key 20-year sojourn at Decca is most notable for its nearly Dickensian range in songs, encompassing every aspect of the vernacular musical community. If *Bing's* chronological arrangement of his Brunswick and Decca recordings evinces a stylistic evolution from the expressive, throaty, rhythmic warbling in the '30's (when he was a hipster) to the spare and resonant emoter of melody in the '40's (when he became Everyman), the sheer variety tends to overwhelm generalizations. The climactic high point of Clooney's presentation was her 31-minute recreation of the medley of hits Crosby sang at his last concerts. Utterly wasteless in phrasing and gesture, she allowed the startling spectrum of material to carry the day. Returning from the concert to the original recordings, you couldn't help but marvel all over again at how one man could so successfully retain his own individuality while disappearing into the generic requirements of ballads, jazz, country, Hawaiian, cowboy songs, spirituals, hymns, novelties, and Irish lullabies. Only Ray Charles would ever attempt as much ground, and it's probably no accident that half the tunes on his breakthrough album, *The Genius Hits the Road*, came from the Crosby songbook.

A most prominent songbook within that songbook is the body of love songs specifically crafted for him by Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke, who, aware that Crosby didn't like to sing "I love you," were constrained to find other formulae—"Moonlight Becomes You," "But Beautiful," "Only Forever," and on and on. If those songs embody the mature and stately Crosby, the 1931 Brunswicks retain a terrific verve, with their surprisingly small but ingeniously arranged ensembles offering such touches as the unison piano and clarinet voicing on "Just One More Chance." For one example of the boundary line between Crosby and Sinatra, compare the former's 1931 "Dancing in the Dark" with Sinatra's 1958 rendering. Crosby's is a luminous *cri de coeur*, an area for an opera never written. Sinatra's is an aggressively hot colloquial dare. The selection in *Bing* leans too heavily on hits (great sides with Eddie Heywood and Les Paul have never been on LP, forget CD), but surprises enliven the presentation, including the first legitimate appearance of the much bootlegged blowup on "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" ("Holy Christ, I'm going off my nut," Crosby croons), and a glorious live "Gone Fishin'" with Louis Armstrong that is less moving than the famous version but much funnier.

Crosby was frequently at his best in duets (unfortunately, his favorite partner, Clooney, didn't record for Decca), and his encounters with Armstrong, Al Jolson, Louis Jordan, Peggy Lee, Jimmy Durante and several others define the form in the pop idiom. He was funny, alert, and generous, and usually had strong material. Sinatra was never particularly good at duets; if the material wasn't dreadful ("Peachtree Street" for him and Clooney), his partner was ("A Good Man Is Hard To Find" for him and Shelley Winters). The idea of using that format for his new album is an example of celebrity exploitation overwhelming all common sense. *Duets* (Capitol) may be the penultimate chapter in his recording career (a second volume of duets, God help us, is already in the can), and it can only sadden his admirers. He reportedly has no short-term memory—a bank of teleprompters surrounds him at concerts—and demonstrably has no voice. What he has in superfluity are all the Sinatra mannerisms, which are not to be confused with the Sinatra emotion, craftsmanship, or style.

In the absence of voice, the mannerisms border on self-parody, an idle display of shallow, crude hip, touched here and there with misogyny. The decline since his last great album, 1981's *She Shot Me Down*, is vast. On that record, the voice was dry and brittle, but the concentration was magnificent, an exemplary instance of a great and learned artist making a virtue of his frailty. Now even his rhythmic élan is compromised: he regularly adds vowels, suggesting a caricatured Italian accent—"pickin' up all those forget-ta-me-nots." As you may have read, most of the 13 performers with whom he sings phoned in their parts, and that's what it sounds like.

Sinatra and Luther Vandross might as well be of different species, musically and culturally, shouting at each other about why that chick is a champ. With Barbara Streisand he shares only an outsized ego: they are long-distance callers with not a hint of musical regard, never mind romance. All but one of songs are Sinatra classics, and these versions add nothing to what we know of them. Only Tony Bennett projects respect for the older man, turning a futile exercise into a near homage and inspiring Sinatra to one of two persuasive performances—the other is his only solo, "All the Way/One for My Baby." Worth hearing? Yes, but to paraphrase Dr. Johnson, not worth going to hear. And yet Sinatra outclasses his partners, who are consumed with a narcissistic indulgence in tonal production, in stylistic affectation ("Dontcha know, Blue Eyes," Bono sobs), at the expense of candor, intuition, irony, and narrative drive. A more humorless group would be hard to imagine; they make Sinatra sound more isolated than he would alone. It is to cry.

Sinatra and Crosby, and Armstrong and Billie Holiday, had an incalculable impact on the canon of modern song. But it was Ella Fitzgerald who erected the pantheon. At Decca in 1950, she released a 10-inch album of eight Gershwin songs. Within the next few years, Norman Granz pried her out of her Decca contract (an intriguing story detailed by John McDonough in the Verve booklet) and, with Cole Porter as the first honoree, started her on the lavish series of songbooks that are among the finest achievements of the LP era. As an example of their impact, consider that Irving Berlin requested inclusion after the Rodgers and Hart collection was issued; as an example of their prescience, consider how close their choices are to those of Alex Wilder and James T. Maher's 1972 *American Popular Song*.

To those who insist that Fitzgerald fails to make the

most of sophisticated lyrics, go back to the Porter set; no one has done better by the upper-crust mockery and minor-key irony of these songs. When the eight anthologies were recorded, between 1956 and 1964, it was commonplace for singers to update lyrics or change phrases to suit altered genders. My only complaint about the whole venture is that she didn't do justice to Lorenz Hart's "Manhattan," the lyric that made him famous. She sings "And *My Fair Lady* is a terrific/Show they say/We both may see it close/Some day," which simply can't compare with, "Our future babies/We'll take to *Abie's Irish Rose*/I hope they'll live to see/It close." And what happened to "We'll go to Greenwich/Where modern men itch/To be free"?

Maybe I've been paying most attention to the Rodgers and Hart volume because I know it less well than the others, but Fitzgerald repeatedly confirms my suspicion that Hart is the best lyricist of all. An alcoholic homosexual Jewish dwarf (four feet 11 inches, actually) who lived with despair and died, at 47, thinking *Oklahoma!* was the promised land, Hart always avoided the expected. He wrote love songs for people who don't expect to be loved, like "My Funny Valentine"—Is your figure less than Greek/Is your mouth a little weak/When you open it to speak/Are you smart?" Don't answer, just be mine anyway. Fitzgerald understands him exactly, knows about "ordering orange juice for one," and "This can't be love/I feel no dizzy spells," and "Not a sign of people/Who needs people?" She can make the best of "When I was very young/The world was younger than I/As merry as a carousel" and the demoralizing chorus that follows, "Sit there and count the raindrops/Falling on you/It's time you knew/All you can count on is the raindrops/That fall on Little Girl Blue." She's just as convincing on the desperation of "Ten Cents a Dance" as she is on the pleasures of "Mountain Greenery."

I agree, she's better still on the overwhelming five-volume set devoted to the Gershwins, here contained on three CDs, packaged in the original (but shrunken) box complete with a tiny replica of the original hardcover booklet and reproductions of the five Buffet sleeve paintings. Nelson Riddle did some of the finest work of his career on that set. Duke Ellington, on the other hand, took it easy, arriving at his homage with little music other than a suite in honor of the singer. Somehow the alchemists worked magic, combining songs with instrumentals, and produced a high-water mark for them both. Of the new performances integrated into these discs, by far the most rewarding is a 10-minute rehearsal of Billy Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge," a rare point of entry for all of us who wondered just how Ellington manipulated his players. The other pantheon composers are Berlin, Harold Arlen, Jerome Kern, and Johnny Mercer, who is the subject of an especially swinging, deceptively casual jazz session with superb Riddle writing. I have no quibbles worth mentioning about the presentation, which was supervised by Michael Lang and is perhaps the wittiest and most fastidiously deployed reissue since the advent of CDs. It is to laugh out loud.

NOTE: This article originally appeared in the *Village Voice* of November 23, 1993. The type has been reset without editorial changes. Pictures have been omitted. Fellow member and Bing biographer Gary Giddens has given us permission to reprint this article.

A Letter from Gary Giddens

Dear Wayne,

Yes, of course you can reprint the "Classical Singing" article; I assume you'll be using it in its entirety and not just the Bing passages.

No one was more relieved at how the A&E documentary came out than me. They kept pushing for negative comments, and when I left the interview, I thought: If they wanted to, they could edit my comments in such a way as to suggest the reverse of what I said. But I argued with the writer and co-producer that the Slatzer version was skewed and untrustworthy, that Crosby was a larger, more complicated figure than was often conceded in the years since the negative publicity began, and my persistence apparently paid off. The result was surprisingly fair (I especially liked the use of Gary Crosby's concluding observation that the old man had "done good"), and quite decently told, given the low-budget dependence on public-domain footage.

What really appalls me is the constant rebroadcasting of the Bing episode of "Hollywood Babylon," which many people believe must be true since it's on TV. I mean the thing is filled with innuendo and sleaze and outright lies—e.g., that the will leaves his children their inheritance when they turn 65 or that Bing punished Gary after they got off the air. I can't tell you how many times I've had this conversation, often with people in the arts who ought to know better:

What are you working on?

A biography of Bing Crosby.

Oh God, I hear he was a real sonofabitch.

Not really, where did you hear that?

Well, there was this television show with Tony Curtis . . .

On the upside, last night I attended the opening of Rosemary Clooney's sixth annual engagement at Rainbow & Stars, and she was superb. Her best show yet, though I probably say that every year. Most of the material is from her new album "Still on the Road," which is surely one of her strongest albums (even she likes it, and she's by far her own toughest critic), but she also does a medley of three Bing-ballads from the Road movies, and wittily tells of the verbal contortions Johnny Burke had to go through to please Bing by writing love songs that didn't say "I love you."

Concerning that remarkable *Goldmine* article, Arne Fogel tells me he wrote a letter to the magazine with a few comments and corrections. If they don't run it, you might want to contact Arne about publishing it in *Bingang*.

Finally, thank you for publishing my query to Ernest Sutkowski. Please let your readers know that I've managed to get hold of "The Great John L" (it turns out that the Library of Congress doesn't have it). Universal has the original uncut negative of "If I Had My Way," but no prints of it. They will make me a negative-to-tape transfer for \$700. If you know any extremely wealthy Bing fanatics, let me know. "Doctor Rhythm" remains a puzzle, and I also have not been able to see the shorts "Just an Echo," "Showdown at Ulcer Gulch," "The Heart of Show Business," "Oreste," and the TV olympics show Bing co-hosted or several of the Christmas and Hollywood Palace shows (though I have most of Palace on audio tape). Anyone who can help me fill in these gaps will be most gratefully acknowledged in the finished work and can rest assured that I will honor all benefactors' request to keep such footage to myself.

Regards,
Gary Giddens
145 East 15th St.
New York, N.Y. 10003

Tacoma's Ken Twiss was crooner Crosby's biggest, best fan

By Bart Rapp
The News Tribune

He was Bing Crosby's biggest fan.

He preserved the legacy when it seemed everyone had forgotten Bing Crosby except for precious December moments when "White Christmas" was played around the world. He was a man who wanted the world to remember that Harry Lillis Crosby was born in 1904 on North J. Street in Tacoma.



Ken Twiss

Ken Twiss—founder, president and eternal protector of the Bing Crosby Society—died in Tacoma last week after a long illness. He was 82.

And yet, Twiss was a child when it came to Bing Crosby. When the society had a snappy little museum in the Commerce Street level of the Pantages Theater, Twiss happily presided over a shrine of Bing pins, Bing neckties, Bing sheet music, Bing belt buckles, Bing wristwatches, a can of Bing beer brewed in Folkestone, England, a BING C license plate from New York state, a table made in 1876 by Bing's grandfather and unused wax cartons meant to hold ice cream marketed in the shimmering name of Bing Crosby.

Twiss discovered a lode of cartons in an antique shop on Broadway. The flavor, naturally, was vanilla. An

unused carton cost \$3, the only memorabilia for sale at the gallery.

Twiss was a Cleveland, Okla., native who moved to Tumwater in 1913, graduated from Puyallup High School in 1931 and became a Bing buff during the Depression.

Twiss accumulated more than 900 Bing 78s, which he donated to the Tacoma Public Library when he became a cook on the submarine USS Intimidator during World War II. While stationed at San Diego's Naval Training Center, Twiss regularly zipped up to Sunset and Vine in Hollywood and sat in the audience of Crosby's weekly radio show on CBS. A CBS producer named Bill Morrow introduced Bing to his biggest fan.

"He was a very easy person to know," Twiss said in 1989, "but I didn't want to bother him, so I stayed at a respectful distance."

A respectful distance was kept when Twiss regularly saw Crosby in the 1950s. Twiss was an executive chef with Pan American Airlines and lived in Burlingame, Calif. He used to see Bing and Kathryn Crosby walking in their hometown of Hillsborough, Calif.

"I would wave to him, and he would wave back," Twiss said, "but I didn't want to bother him."

Twiss moved to Tacoma and became chef at Johnny's Dock and Busch's Round Table. He listened to Bing Crosby records every day. He formed the Bing Crosby Historical Society in 1977, soon after Crosby died.

For 15 years, Twiss was a gang of one, remembering Crosby's sighing songs. "Just One Word of Consolation" was his favorite. It always made Twiss cry.

Twiss cried when he had to close the little gallery below the Pantages. Earlier this year he signed papers to dissolve the society. It once had 350 members worldwide.

When Ken Twiss died, it was easy to imagine a snowy scene in heaven. Bing waves and asks Ken to come over on his side of the street. Bing Crosby sings "White Christmas" in a crooning voice only Ken can hear.

Editor's Note: Several of our members asked us to reprint this article about Ken Twiss from the Tacoma News-Tribune of December 14, 1993. The type has been reset, but no editorial changes have been made.





VOICE OF THE CENTURY

By Mike Joyce

(Special to the Washington Post)

Long before the term "crossover artist" was coined, Bing Crosby casually and crooningly personified it. He may not have consciously charted all the territory he covers on the new box set "Bing Crosby: His Legendary Years 1931-1957 (MCA), drawn from his years with the Brunswick and Decca labels, but it's impossible to imagine another singer being so comfortable or convincing in such varied jazz, pop, cowboy, Irish, Hawaiian, religious, patriotic and novelty settings. Or so universally popular.

Jack Kapp, who worked for Brunswick and later headed up Decca, generally gets credit for making sure Crosby's repertoire defied categorization, a strategy that sometimes emphasized diversity at the expense of quality. That perhaps explains why Crosby infrequently recorded songs by Cole Porter, though as annotator Will Friedwald points out, Porter's uncharacteristic novelty "Don't Fence Me In" became a huge Crosby hit.

Yet if the songs didn't always prove worthy of the singer, Crosby generally made the most of them, relying in part on his affinity for jazz phrasing and improvisation—evident in his patented vocal trills and the playful spontaneity that often characterized his duets with Louis Armstrong, Louis Jordan, Peggy Lee, Jimmy Durante and others—and in part on his craft as storyteller and balladeer. To hear him sing the more substantial songs on this collection, such as "Dancing in the Dark," "It's Been a Long, Long Time," "Autumn Leaves," "But Beautiful" or "What's New," is to understand why Tommy Dorsey once told Frank Sinatra, "There's only one singer you ought to listen to, and his name is Crosby. He listens to the words, and that's the only thing that ought to matter to you too."

All told, the four-CD box gathers together 100 tracks, beginning with some engaging small band sessions on Brunswick (including Crosby's trademark scat reading of "Just One More Chance") and encompassing classic versions of "Stardust," "White Christmas," "Easter Parade," "I'll Be Seeing You," "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and two versions of his theme song, "Where the Blue of the Night (Meets the Gold of the Day)". There's also a rather unlikely Crosby alliance with Woody

Herman and His Woodchoppers on "Deep in the Heart of Texas," plus irrepressible and irresistible pairings of Crosby and Armstrong on "Gone Fishin'" and Crosby and Lee on "Watermelon Weather."

A previously unissued but often bootlegged version of "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" also ranks as a classic of sorts; after losing his place, though not his composure, the unflappable crooner coolly improvises a verse in unprintable fashion.

Not the least of the collection's pleasures is Friedwald's astute and amusing notes, which deftly integrate such delightful anecdotes as Irving Berlin's recollection of bringing "White Christmas" to Crosby: "Of course, he's not the one to throw his arms about and get excited," Berlin recalled, "he just took his pipe out of his mouth and said, 'I don't think you have to worry about this one.'"

Editor's Note: This piece is from a longer article from the *Washington Post* entitled "Voices of the Century: Looking Back at the Legends; Crooners Crosby, Como and Mathis, Smooth as Silk." It was sent to us by Helen Ley. The type has been reset without editorial changes. Original pictures have not been reprinted.



Sighs & Whispers

by John McDonough

Time was when a small reissue or two could focus fresh media attention on a forgotten artist, or a forgotten period of an active one. As the layers of recorded pop culture have piled up, though, it now takes a powerful event of critical mass to blast through the accumulation to get noticed. **Frank Sinatra—The Columbia Years (1943-1952) The Complete Recordings** (Columbia/Legacy 52866-77; 12 CDs, avg. 73:00 min.; ★★★★★) certainly is such an event. And so, to a lesser degree, is **Bing Crosby: His Legendary Years, 1931-1957** (MCA 10887; 75:50/73:58/74:08/75:20: ★★★★★½).

The Sinatra collection offers 293 tracks, including 25 unissued items. A few alternates have been substituted for master takes, but the masters probably will be picked up in an album of 60 Sinatra V-Discs due from Columbia in July. As for the 10 Sinatra sides from 1939 with Harry James, which mark the beginning of his career and might have been gathered on a separate "bonus" CD, we can probably expect them later this year under James' name.

The sound is nothing less than a breakthrough. It has a consistent presence and clarity that is extraordinary, from the earliest sides on. Producer Didier Deutsch has wisely avoided mastering from 78s and used 33⅓ acetate "safties" (and tape after 1951). Note the characteristics of the occasional surface noise, which, bless 'em, they didn't shave off with the rest of the highs. Save for an odd dropout at 30 seconds into "I've Got A Home In That Rock," the sound is flawless. Compare the magnificent sonics here to Columbia's 1986 box collection of Sinatra. Though given the full digital treatment, the sound there was compressed and '40s-ish.

If it's kudos to the producer, though, it's raspberries to the designers. They'll be the death of literacy in this country if anyone will. The dolt here is Tony Sellari, whose often tasteless and annoying layouts for the album booklet insist on overprinting six-point text on faded photos, rendering both, as if by some alchemy of incompetence, into spaghetti. Will Friedwald's important and knowing (except for a mean snipe at Linda Ronstadt on p. 117) notes are the principle victim of this design cliché, which is good for a star off the rating. All is not lost, though. In a nice touch, label art tracks period designs. And each CD volume reproduces cover art based on the Sinatra albums of the '40s and '50s.

Enduring artists inevitably create their own orthodoxies, which frame everything they do and are difficult to amend. Sinatra launched himself as a purveyor of velveteen romance and longing and hardly stepped out of that role until the end of his Columbia period. The result here is a long, long trail of slow tempos and plush backgrounds by Axel Stordahl that have much in common with the coming Capitals.

It has been the party line to write off the Columbia Sinatras as the work of a skilled but callow youth, an impression Columbia has not seriously contested until now. This set should



Sinatra: velveteen romance and longing

change that notion. The music whispers to you. You want to lean in and listen. It is exquisitely intimate. Here is the basis of Sinatra's power to draw his audience into a private emotional orbit. Also, more than I had realized, these were the years Sinatra built the core of the repertoire that he would revisit so many times over the rest of his career (e.g., "The Song Is You," "One For My Baby"). We who listen to jazz with sometimes an excess of reverence and partiality are inclined to praise only those singers who reconfigure a song through improvisation, as if anything less is uncreative; as if the song were not enough. This leads us to undervalue those "uncreative" singers who "just" sing. We miss the point of the classical nature of much of the best popular music, where the text is sacred and those who honor it with virtuosity and intelligence, as Sinatra consistently does here, are no less artists for doing so.

Though love songs dominate, there are novelties, too, especially after producer Mitch Miller's ascent at Columbia. The much-discussed but seldom-heard "Mama Will Bark" is here, considered by many the nadir of Sinatra's disc career. But maybe by taking Sinatra on the basis of his own orthodoxy, we deny him license to do the kind of silly material that Bing Crosby could do with ironic nonchalance.

The MCA Crosby set (101 sides, four unissued) is historically more interesting by far. It traces the evolution of modern pop singing—i.e., Crosby—from its bungalow-style beginnings in the hotel dance band to the concert-sized castles of strings and french horns erected for him by Victor Young and John Scott Trotter. Crosby's voice evolves with uncanny timeliness, from the husky baritone of the 1931 Brunswicks to the mellow pipe organ that everyone knows from "White Christmas" on. The turning point seems to come around "What's New" late in 1939, reminding us that by the time Sinatra first recorded with Axel Stordahl in 1942 (for Victor), the construction was essentially complete and ready to walk into.

Most of the important Crosby work of the period is here, along with a few bits of studio chitchat, a funny breakdown, and a 1943 Rhythm Boys reunion on "Mississippi Mud" that's deliciously p.i.—politically incorrect.



Bing: casual, cracker-barrel charm

Both the early Brunswicks and many of the Deccas bear the mark of Jack Kapp, who produced much Crosby work and kept the crooner on a tight commercial path. (A good survey of his jazz sides is collected on *Bing Crosby And Some Jazz Friends*.)

Though many regard Sinatra as a child of Crosby, they are unlike in a fundamental way. Sinatra, the volatile, complex, and private one, seemed to draw you into his life when he sang. A poignancy and emotional verisimilitude swirled around him. Crosby, on the other hand, was Mr. what-you-see-is-what-you-get, full of casual, cracker-barrel charm that was friendly and irresistible, especially on duets with Louis Armstrong and Johnny Mercer. And yet, he let no one inside.

Sinatra is enough of an actor so that when his voice slipped, the actor easily picked up the slack. Crosby, who never had to face serious vocal erosion, was the pure musician. Even his talk had rhythm to it. Listen to "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy." Sinatra never swung a phrase or squeezed a pitch quite like Bing. Some regret that Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald never recorded an album. More to regret is that Ella and Bing didn't. They were natural partners.

Sinatra swings in bold, jabbing, staccato italics on an unusual concert album recorded in 1962, *Sinatra And Sextet: Live In Paris* (Reprise 45487; 74:05: ★★★★★). With the singer a hot item again, Warner Bros. has dipped into the trunk for some vintage, unreleased material. The occasion here was his Paris debut (at the Lido), one stop on a world tour. But the 25-tune concert comes across today less as the event it might have been at the time than simply a document of Sinatra's straight concert fare of the period. Nevertheless, this performance is fresh and spontaneous with occasional asides and even some passing throat problems on "Nancy." The format has a looseness to it that permits nice phrasing variations within the basic style of the studio sides. The sextet—featuring pianist Bill Miller, vibraphonist Emil Richards, Al Viola on guitar, and reed player Harry Klee—is compact and swinging, and delivers not jazz so much as miniatures of Sinatra's big-band charts like "Chicago." DB

Courtesy of Jim Determan

DOWNBEAT March 1994

New Releases

With Contributions by: Charles Baillie ■ Jim Determan ■
Steven Lewis ■ George O'Reilly ■ Girvan Paterson ■
Ernest Sutkowski ■ Frank Whittaker ■ F. B. Wiggins

FROM AUSTRALIA:

Although it hasn't been released in Australia, I have managed to get, via England, the 4-CD set *Bing—His Legendary Years*. What a magnificent presentation! One of the best photographs of Bing I've seen on the box, plus a most informative and detailed booklet, and although we could nitpick about what tracks should or should not have been included, overall it did justice to this original and greatest of all "pop" stars. At least MCA got it right, and no one has been more critical of them than me over the years, but credit should go where it is due.

I managed to see a dubbed copy of the MCA TV special of the same title, and to me it is the best so far of the Bing documentaries (not that there have been many). It was refreshing to see a young 90's type guy, who is obviously a big fan of Bing, hosting; also it was refreshing that virtually nothing of Bing's personal life was mentioned. No Dixie, Kathy or the boys; they just went for the entertainment from the man who did it best. The host also said all the right things that we the fans wanted to hear: that Bing had sold over one billion records (more than the Beatles or Elvis), was the number one movie star for more consecutive years than anyone, and so on—just what we've wanted them to say about Bing, plus of course some fabulous film clips that only MCA could provide. I would kill to get this program on laser disc. (Ed. Note: See article under "Videos.") I just hope that after finally getting it right, MCA doesn't ruin it all by poor marketing or availability.

I for one intend to write to them and praise them for their efforts, but also urge them to make sure these two great releases don't just "vanish" overnight, as has so often happened in the past.

— Girvan Paterson, South Oakleigh, Victoria, Australia.

■ FROM JIM DETERMAN:

Would you believe that with *Bing: His Legendary Years* I finally heard the original version of "Love Is Just Around The Corner" for the first time? And I can't recall ever hearing "But Beautiful" before except in *Road To Rio*. It's about time this stuff is available! Whatever its weaknesses, it seems to me it is the best set MCA has ever had in print on Bing. I must say I was a little disappointed at the comments calling the set "disappointing." When Columbia released *The Crooner*, *The Columbia Years 1928-1934*, the complaint was that too much obscure material was released when a lot of

Bing's prime Columbia material was not yet in print on CD (although *The Early Jazz Years* was subsequently released, partially filling the gap). Now the complaint against MCA is that the obvious material was released. How can they win? Let's not be too impossible to please! Hopefully there will be more to come. I would like to see a collection of material with the Andrews Sisters and more of the *Bing's Hollywood* series. And why hasn't Verve released *Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings*? It seems to me that of all Bing's LPs this one ought to make the transition to CD in the modern market the best, with its modern jazz influenced orchestra (admittedly with weaknesses in some arrangements, but at least no sappy vocal chorus) and its selection of classic songs. So how many CDs would it take to release *The Complete Bing Crosby On Decca*?

I wanted to mention that *Bing Crosby: A Musical Autobiography* has been issued as a 4-CD set by Japanese MCA (as MVCN-24003-6). It is complete with all 89 cuts and Bing's reminiscences in between. It does not have the original liner notes, but rather two booklets, one with lyrics to the songs, and the other a review of his movie career which might be good if I could read Japanese. Also, the full length (12-cut) version of *Some Fine Old Chestnuts* is out in Japan as MVCN-295 on MCA. I got them both from Sound City 2000, Inc. (503) 654-2196. Unfortunately they cost about \$30 per CD, which makes *Autobiography* pretty pricey. Finally *Guys and Dolls* from the Reprise Repertory Theatre is out on Reprise, featuring Bing singing with Sinatra and Dean Martin on "Fugue For 'Tinhorns" and "The Oldest Established Permanent Floating Crap Game in New York". The album also features other fine performances by Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr., Jo Stafford, Debbie Reynolds, the McGuire Sisters, Clark Dennis, Allan Sherman, and a nice version of "If I Were A Bell" by the late Dinah Shore.

Finally, I wanted to comment on what seems to me to be a gradual reassessment of Classic American Popular Song and singers among the rock and roll generations. With artists like Linda Ronstadt (yes, it's been building for some time) and Natalie Cole, and even U2 covering the songs, and artists like Harry Connick, Jr. and k. d. lang drawing on the style for their own purposes, popular song is again having an influence in pop music. The new *Rolling Stone Album Guide* covers a wider range of popular singers, and gives them far better reviews. Johnny Mercer (new to the guide) gets rave reviews and

5-star albums, the same for Tony Bennett and Nat Cole (some of his albums jumped from two stars in the last version to four in the new release). Sinatra's reviews were always reasonably good, but the ratings of albums besides the obvious classics have improved. Unfortunately their scope was apparently not broad enough to include Bing. Yet, the material out at the time on CD didn't really do him justice anyway, and I'm not sure the reviewers were quite ready to appreciate his influence yet. *Downbeat*, however, which I hadn't seen many reviews of Crosby material in until recently, has had two good reviews of Bing's CD releases lately *Bing Crosby and Some Jazz Friends* with four stars, and *His Legendary Years* with four and a half stars.

Rock and roll gained popularity due largely to disenchantment with popular music among the young. However, this was during the early 50s, actually rather a nadir for American Popular Song anyway. I apologize if this offends some people, but I grew up in the 70's, a nadir for rock music. Now with a little distance from which to look back at things, and the ability to look at the best examples of the style from the teens to the fifties, a number of young artists are seeing the quality of songwriting and the vocal skill of the singers, and are either performing some of the material as repertoire, or incorporating some of its elements into their own style. k.d. lang, who has caused a bit of controversy with her announcement of her sexual preference, also caused some controversy in a different direction by declaring herself to be a Lawrence Welk fan and has described her own style aptly, if also somewhat tongue in cheek, as post-atomic cabaret music. The end result will be, one hopes, a better appreciation of a uniquely American style of music among the younger generations, and the continuing vitality of that style and its influence in popular music in the future. And Bing, as one of the primary progenitors of the style, is bound to profit from this reassessment in the long run, as it appears he is already.

Finally, I have a little note I copied from *The Book Of Lists* a long time ago, I believe the 1977 edition. It is a list of "Bing Crosby's 10 Favorite Performers Of All Time," and Bing is quoted as saying, "These are not listed in order of preference, and include no actors, only performers. I could, of course, list hundreds more." Here they are:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Al Jolson | 2. Ethel Waters |
| 3. James Barton | 4. Frank Sinatra |
| 5. Lena Horne | 6. Louis Armstrong |
| 7. Nat Cole | 8. Mel Torme |
| 9. Judy Garland | 10. Victor Borge |

It seems appropriate that three of the artists Bing will be sharing a sheet of stamps with were among his ten favorite performers.

BOOKS

■ THE CROSBY COLLECTION, PART 3.

Volume Three in the series of detailed reviews by Fred Reynolds of each of Bing's commercial recordings, in chronological order, is now available. This new International Crosby Circle hardcover book covers the years from 1942 through 1950.

The total cost, including international postage from England and forwarding charges within the United States and Canada, is \$30.00 per book. If you would like a copy, please send a personal check or postal money order, payable in U. S. dollars, made out to F. B. Wiggins, 5608 North 34th St., Arlington, VA 22207. Telephone: (703) 241-5608.

Copies of Volume One (covering the years 1926 through 1934) and Volume Two (covering the years from 1935 through 1941) in this series are also available at the total cost of \$25.00 each.

Feel free to write or phone "Wig" Wiggins if you have any questions.

■ Those who have not found the book *Over Here, Over There* by Maxene Andrews in their bookstores may order it from Mr. Nostalgia. The price is \$22.95 plus \$2.00 postage. This book was reviewed in the July 1993 issue of *Bingang*.

COMPACT DISCS

■ BING CROSBY: "A LITTLE BIT OF IRISH" AND MORE! Golden Olden Records GOR CD-101 (Ireland).

Available from Footlight Records, 113 East 12th St., New York, NY 10003 (phone 212-533-1572; ask for Bill Daugherty). Cost: \$18.95 plus postage. SELECTIONS BY BING: Molly Malone (with reprise) • Come Back To Erin • Galway Bay • The Isle Of Innisfree • MacNamara's Band • When Irish Eyes Are Smiling (these 6 selections from Irish television) • When You're Away • Ah! Sweet Mystery Of Life • Sweethearts • Thine Alone • Gypsy Love Song (w/Langford) • I'm Falling In Love With Someone (w/Langford) (these 6 selections from Decca masters) • Indian Summer • The Donovans • St. Patrick's Day Parade • Top Of The Mornin' • That Tumbledown Shack In Athlone • Dear Old Donegal • Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral • How Are Things In Glocca Morra? • Segment With John McCormack (these 9 selections from U.S. radio).

Editor's Note: You will certainly want a copy of this very unusual CD, with its wide range of source material. Although the sound on the 1937 John McCormack segment is not very good, the engineers have done their best with it, and it is wonderful to have this souvenir of the great Irish tenor on Bing's Kraft Music Hall radio show. Incidentally, Bing talks with McCormack, but does not sing with him. McCormack sings two solos. George O'Reilly, who produced this CD in Ireland, very kindly sent Club Crosby review copies of this disc.

■ **HARRY LILLIS: STEP TO THE REAR. Limited Collector's Issue HLYCD-001.** Available from Footlight Records, address shown above, for \$16.95 plus postage. Also available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$10.98 plus \$2.00 postage. CONTENTS: Seven Nights A Week • Man On Fire • Paris Holiday (w/Hope) • Nothing in Common (w/Hope) • I Couldn't Care Less • Say One For Me • The Secret Of Christmas • The Music Of Home • The New Ashmolean Marching Society • It's A Good Day • Aloha Means I Love You • Incurably Romantic • The Second Time Around • Fugue For Tinhorns (w/Sinatra & Martin) • The Oldest Established Permanent Floating Crap Game (w/Sinatra & Martin) • Something Sort Of Grandish (w/Reynolds) • Younger Than Springtime • Christmas Dinner Country Style • Do You Hear What I Hear? • The White World Of Winter • Far From Home • How Green Was My Valley • Step To The Rear • What Do We Do With The World? • It's Not Where You Start • Tie A Yellow Ribbon Round The Old Oak Tree • Christmas Star • We Love Old St. Mary's.

Editor's Note: Considering the number of record companies involved in these recordings, there is a strong possibility that this is a "bootleg" recording. But who cares? It is a good selection of Crosby tunes, some of them otherwise hard to find.

■ **FRANK SINATRA: THE LIVE DUETS, 1943-1957. Voice V-CD-1101.** Available from Stash-Day-break, phone 800-666-5277, \$16.98. Also available from Mr. Nostalgia, P. O. Box 26494, Tamarac, FL 33320 for the same price (plus \$2.00 postage). DUETS WITH BING: Among My Souvenirs • September Song • As Time Goes By • Till We Meet Again • Meet Me Tonight In Dreamland • There's A Long, Long Trail • Parody Medley (several lines of each song): It Could Happen To You • I Heard You Cried Last Night • I'll Get By • I Don't Believe It, But Say It Again • Out Of Nowhere • Going My Way • Sunday, Monday Or Always.

Editor's Note: All are from radio or TV. Another interesting item on this CD is a parody of "Don't Bring Lulu" called "Don't Bring Crosby," from a 1946 AFRS show, with Jack Carson.

■ **BOB CROSBY'S BOB CATS, VOL. 3, 1940. Swaggie (?) (Australia).** Available from Stash-Day-break, phone 800-666-5277, \$19.98. SELECTIONS BY BING: Tea For Two (w/Boswell) • Yes, Indeed! (w/Boswell) • Dolores (w/Merry Macs) • Pale Moon (w/Merry Macs).

■ **THE RODGERS AND HAMMERSTEIN COLLECTION. Broadway Gold (MCA Classics).** SELECTIONS BY BING: Oh, What A Beautiful Morning • The Loneliness Of Evening • No Other Love • There's Music In You. (All from Decca masters).

■ **THE STARS IN SONG. Axis CDAX-701592.** SELECTIONS BY BING: Road To Morocco (w/Hope) •

Mr. Meadowlark (w/Mercer) • A Couple Of Song And Dance Men (w/Astaire) • Yah-Ta-Ta, Yah-Ta-Ta (w/Garland) • A Fine Romance (w/D.L. Crosby) • Mr. Crosby And Mr. Mercer (w/Mercer) • The Waiter And The Porter And The Upstairs Maid (w/Martin & Teagarden) • Down By The Riverside (w/G. Crosby) • Pennies From Heaven (w/Langford & Armstrong) • The Spaniard That Blighted My Life (w/Jolson) • There's No Business Like Show Business (w/Haymes & Andrews Sisters).

■ **THE VINTAGE YEARS. Columbia 474337-2 (Australia).** CONTENTS, DISC 1: Did You Ever See A Dream Walking? • I Guess It Had To Be That Way • Black Moonlight • Dinah • Just An Echo In The Valley • Beautiful Girl • After Sundown • We'll Make Hay While The Sun Shines • Temptation • Our Big Love Scene • Please • Here Lies Love • Learn To Croon • Moonstruck.

DISC 2: Down The Old Ox Road • Thanks • The Day You Came Along • Love Thy Neighbor • Once In A Blue Moon • Good Night, Lovely Little Lady • May I? • She Reminds Me Of You • Love In Bloom • I've Got The World On A String • A Ghost Of A Chance • How Deep Is The Ocean? • St. Louis Blues • Sweet Georgia Brown.

■ **THE BING CROSBY COLLECTION. EMI 8142262 (Australia).** CONTENTS, DISC 1: Please • Sweet And Lovely • Dancing In The Dark • This Is My Night To Dream • On The Sentimental Side • Try A Little Tenderness • Blue Hawaii • Sweet Leilani • Song Of The Islands • Goodnight, Sweetheart • Black Moonlight • Too Marvelous For Words • I've Got The World On A String • A Ghost Of A Chance • Dinah • Sweet Georgia Brown • Pennies From Heaven • Still The Bluebird Sings • Maybe • Sing A Song Of Sunbeams.

DISC 2: Where The Blue Of The Night • How Deep Is The Ocean? • Too Romantic • Sentimental And Melancholy • Temptation • Don't Be That Way • Stardust • Silver On The Sage • I'm An Old Cowhand • The Last Roundup • The Funny Old Hills • Someday Sweetheart • Out Of Nowhere • Did You Ever See A Dream Walking? • An Apple For The Teacher • Brother, Can You Spare A Dime? • If You Should Ever Need Me • Down The Old Ox Road • Were You Sincere? • Thanks.

■ **16 CLASSIC PERFORMANCES. Regal 1572742.** CONTENTS: Please • I've Got The World On A String • Pennies From Heaven • Dinah • Temptation • How Deep Is The Ocean? • Blue Hawaii • Thanks • Did You Ever See A Dream Walking? • I'm An Old Cowhand • St. Louis Blues • Where The Blue Of The Night • Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams • Some Of These Days • A Ghost Of A Chance • Someday Sweetheart.

■ **DINAH. Pilz 448212-2 (Germany).** CONTENTS: Where The Blue Of The Night (Tk A) • Sweet and Lovely • Dinah (Tk B) • Shine • Sweet Georgia Brown (Tk A) • Cabin In The Cotton • Some Of These Days • You're

Beautiful Tonight, My Dear • You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me (Tk A) • You've Got Me Crying Again • Temptation (Tk A) • May I? • June In January (Tk A) • With Every Breath I Take (Tk A) • I'm An Old Cowhand • Mr. Gallagher And Mr. Shean (Tk E) • You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby (Tk A)

■ **HOAGY CARMICHAEL — "MR. MUSIC MASTER."** Pearl Flapper 7004 (UK). Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$17.98 plus \$2.00 postage. SELECTIONS BY BING: Moonburn • Small Fry (w/Mercer).

■ **BING CROSBY: THE GREAT YEARS (1939-1942)** Pearl Flapper 7027 (UK). Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$17.98, plus \$2.00 postage. CONTENTS: Deep In The Heart Of Texas (w/Herman) • White Christmas • Wait Till The Sun Shines, Nellie (w/Martin) • Moonlight Becomes You • The Road To Morocco (w/Hope) • Walking The Floor Over You (w/Bob Crosby) • Yes, Indeed (w/Boswell & Bob Crosby) • Mister Meadowlark (w/Mercer) • Where The Blue Of The Night • Let's All Meet At My House (w/Lane & Herman) • Do You Ever Think Of Me? • Between A Kiss And A Sigh • When Day Is Done • Be Honest With Me • Sing Me A Song Of The Islands • Tea For Two (w/Boswell & Bob Crosby) • Tumbling Tumbleweeds • Miss You • Along The Santa Fe Trail • Start The Day Right (w/Boswell) • I Want My Mama (w/Herman).

■ **DINAH SHORE (WHEN DINAH RULED THE EARTH).** VJC 1052. Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$15.98, plus \$2.00 postage. SELECTION WITH BING: The Way You Look Tonight (from radio).

■ **THE ANDREWS SISTERS (1937-1940) ASV-Living Era AJA-5096 (UK).** Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$15.98 plus \$2.00 postage. SELECTION WITH BING: Ciribiribin.

■ **HITS OF '41. ASV-Living Era AJA-5100 (UK).** Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$15.98 plus \$2.00 postage. SELECTIONS BY BING: San Antonio Rose (w/Bob Crosby) • You Are My Sunshine • I'd Know You Anywhere.

■ **HITS OF '42. ASV-Living Era AJA-5103 (UK).** Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$15.98 plus \$2.00 postage. SELECTIONS BY BING: Moonlight Becomes You • Deep In The Heart Of Texas (w/Herman) • White Christmas.

■ **HITS OF '37. ASV-Living Era AJA-5116 (UK).** Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$15.98, plus \$2.00 postage. SELECTIONS BY BING: Sweet Leilani • Bob White (w/Boswell) • The Moon Got In My Eyes.

■ **SMITHSONIAN COLLECTION (MCA) (2-CD set)** Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$32.00 plus \$2.00 postage. SELECTIONS BY BING: I'm Thinking Tonight

Of My Blue Eyes • San Antonio Rose • It's Been A Long, Long Time.

■ **HOLLYWOOD STARS GO TO WAR.** Vintage Jazz VJC-1048. Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$15.98 plus \$2.00 postage. SELECTION BY BING: San Fernando Valley.

■ **A FLASH OF '29.** Phontastic 7608 (Sweden). Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$17.98 plus \$2.00 postage. SELECTIONS BY BING: If I Had A Talking Picture Of You (w/Whiteman) • After You've Gone (w/Whiteman).

■ **YOU'RE DRIVING ME CRAZY (1930).** Phontastic 7618 (Sweden). Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$17.98 plus \$2.00 shipping. SELECTION BY BING: Happy Feet (w/Rhythm Boys).

■ **SMOKE RINGS (1932)** Phontastic 7641 (Sweden). Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$17.98 plus \$2.00 shipping. SELECTIONS BY BING: Brother, Can You Spare A Dime? • St. Louis Blues • Sweet Georgia Brown.

■ **STORMY WEATHER (1933)** Phontastic 7647 (Sweden). Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$17.98 plus \$2.00 postage. SELECTIONS BY BING: You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me • My Honey's Lovin' Arms (w/Mills Bros.)

BING CROSBY AND ROSEMARY CLOONEY: HEY, LOOK US OVER. Jasmine 318 (UK). Available from Mr. Nostalgia, \$15.98 plus \$2.00 shipping. CONTENTS: Introd. by George Fedderman • Isn't This A Lovely Day? • Anything You Can Do • They Say It's Wonderful • Ain't We Got Fun • Let's Take A Walk Around The Block • Summertime • Let's Call The Whole Thing Off • People Will Say We're In Love • Lover • Hey, Look Me Over • Let's Put Out The Lights • They Can't Take That Away From Me • Everytime I See You I'm In Love Again • Paris Medley: Any Town Is Paris When You're Young • Paris In The Spring • The Last Time I Saw Paris • April In Paris.

VIDEOS

Charles Baillie issued this report on *Magic II* in the May 1994 issue of *Bingtalks*:

"Bryan Johnson indicates that he has every intention of eventually producing *Magic II*; but other projects—and the need to make more profitable videos—have put it on the back burner for the time being. One of the projects which must take precedence is the laser disc version of *Bing Crosby—His Legendary Years*. MCA/Paramount has asked Bryan to handle this, and he is contemplating including additional material to make the laser disc even more attractive to collectors. He has promised to keep me advised on the timing of the laser disc project, as well as any progress on *Magic II*.

SWAPS AND SUCH



DUE TO matters beyond my control, I would like to sell several hundred Bing Crosby LP's and about a dozen Crosby books. Listing available. Stanley Wayman, 18 Beckerle St., Danbury, CT 06811-4608.

FOR SALE: My complete Crosby collection—records and LP's. There are probably only 5 or 6 songs missing from the complete list. Conrad S. Javier, 107 Cherry Rd., Syracuse, NY 13219.

WANTED: An LP or 45 with Bing's "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" on it. Bill Moynihan, 683 St., Ext. R.D. 4, Jamestown, NY 14701.

WANTED: I am interested in Crosby sheet music, also memorabilia and videos on TV series *Petticoat Junction*, also cassette of first and last Bing Crosby radio shows. Todd M. Cohen, 6905 Winchester Ave., Ventnor, NJ 08406.

FOR SALE: We specialize in movie memorabilia from outside the U.S.A., such as *High Time* (Danish program), \$10; *Going My Way* (Danish program), \$10; *Road to Hong Kong* (Mexican lobby card set), \$35. Shipping \$5.00. Grant Underwood, Global Cinema, 3413 36th St., Lubbock, TX 79413, (806) 797-6348.

WANTED: Cassettes from Bing's *Kraft Music Hall* shows of 1938, 1939 and 1940. Reply to Jay Coleman, P. O. Box 1813, Sedona, AZ 86339.

FOR SALE: Crosby signatures (Bing and Kathryn). Both signed a book as a gift to friend Herb Rotchford. For sale to highest bidder. Contact Frank Taylor, (509) 624-6221, between 4:00 and 9:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time.

WANTED: Cassette copies of 22 songs Bing recorded for Project Records June 21 and 26, 1962, plus cassette of Kraft show of Dec. 25, 1941. Carmel Gallegos, 776 Commerce #103, Tacoma, WA 98402, (206) 572-4766.

WANTED: A copy of *New Tricks* on CD (from Japanese MCA), a copy of a British CD released in tribute to the 15th anniversary of Bing's death, and featuring "That's What Life Is All About" and Hoyt Axton's "Have A Nice Day" along with other cuts recorded by Bing for United Artists (?) with Ken Barnes producing. Finally a copy of *Call Me Lucky*, the new DaCapo Press version. Will pay cash, or maybe trade LPs or 78s. Jim Determan, 46 Briggs Ave., Encinitas, CA 92024-3602.

FOR SALE: Two board games called the *Crosby Derby*. Good condition. Lori Morrow, phone (309) 786-4049.

WANTED: Bing Crosby LPs: (12-inch Australian): *Going Hollywood, Vol. 3; Strike Up The Band; Holiday in Europe—Rehearsal; Philco Radio Time; Shhh! Bing Crosby, Vol. 2; Bing and Buddy... Cole That Is; Bing, Buddy & Rose... Clooney, That Is.* 12-inch LP: *Sunday In Hollywood*, with Ann Blythe, f8-MP4414-15. 45: "Indian Summer," De. 9-27643; *Bing Crosby Sings Victor Herbert*, De. boxed set 9-111; "Shoe Shine Boy," De. 91612; "Thanks," Chevron label (possibly Australian). 78: "Voice of the Stars" (English); "Where The Blue Of The Night"/"I'm Sorry, Dear," Br. 6226 (both Tk B); "Black Moonlight," Br. 6643 (Tk A) or on BA 33160, CQ 8360; "Temptation," Br. 6695 (Tk B);

"When You Dream About Hawaii," S. African Br., master DLA-908-A; "Dancing Under The Stars," BrE, master 906B; "In A Little Hula Heaven," De. 11013, master 729B (red label); "House That Jack Built For Jill," De. 11009, (Tk B, red label); "South Sea Island Magic," De. 25010 (master DLA-522B, black label); "Hawaiian Paradise," De. 25010 (master DLA-521B, black label). Also Paramount pressings, exploitation discs, Philco transcriptions, unissued test pressings, air checks, etc. Anything non-commercial. V.H.S. Cassettes: *Please; Hollywood on Parade; Just An Echo; The Road To Victory; The Shining Hour; Hollywood Victory Caravan; Bing Presents Orestes; Swing With Bing; High Tor; Showdown At Ulcer Gulch; Cinerama's Russian Adventure; Bing Crosby's Washington State; Duffy's Tavern; Out Of This World; Here Is My Heart; Top O' The Morning; One More Chance; The Great John L.*; Other TV shows. Willing to make trades of Bing's and other movies. Harold Sunners, 54 Coleridge St., Brooklyn, NY 11235.

HAVE BACK ISSUES of *Bingang* since 1978 that will probably be destroyed sometime in the future. If any members would like them, they are free for the asking. Ewald Stechholz, 42 Reed St., Rockville, CT 06066.

FOR SALE: Many hard-to-find Crosby recordings. Call or write Bill Daugherty, Footlight Records, 113 East 12th St., New York, NY 10003, phone (212)-533-1572, fax (212) 673-1496.

WANTED: A copy of *My Life With Bing*, by Kathryn Crosby (Collage, 1983). Peter Cakanic, 902 Plaza Place, North Augusta, SC 29841-4909. Telephone (803) 278-0645.

OTHER CROSBY ORGANIZATIONS

BING'S FRIENDS & COLLECTORS SOCIETY
236 Andrieux St.
Sonoma, CA 95476

BINGTHINGS SOCIETY
5021 57th Ave. Court West
Tacoma, WA 98467

INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE (U.K.)
F. B. Wiggins, U. S. Representative
5608 North 34th St.
Arlington, VA 22207

QUEENSLAND BING CROSBY SOCIETY
P. O. Box 92, Ferny Hills
Queensland, Australia 4055

The Eddie Cantor
Appreciation Society
c/o Sheila R. Riddle
P. O. Box 312
Mount Gay, West Virginia 25637
Monthly Newsletter
Dues \$15 per year

Editor's Note: Some of these are NEW RELEASES!



We're Not Dressing (1934)

Musical precursor to "Gilligan's Island" stars Bing Crosby as a deckhand on a ship populated by high society-types who get to give the orders when the vessel shipwrecks on a South Seas island. Carole Lombard, George Burns, Gracie Allen, Ethel Merman, Leon Errol and Ray Milland co-star; songs include "It's a Lie," "May I?" and "She Reminds Me of You."

07-2126 AVAILABLE 7/94 \$14.99

King Of Jazz (1929)

This spectacular jazz revue marked the birth of the Technicolor musical. Great bits include bandleader Paul Whiteman visiting a jungle inhabited by Oswald the Rabbit, Bing Crosby singing "Happy Feet," 500 cowboys singing "Song of Dawn," and George Gerstwin's "Rhapsody in Blue." 93 min.

07-1163 \$19.99

Going My Way (1944)

The timeless heartwarming tale about a priest whose unconventional methods annoy and delight his gruff superior. Bing Crosby and Barry Fitzgerald won Oscars for their roles, as did director Leo McCarey and the film itself. 126 min.

07-1074 WAS \$19.99 \$14.99

The Bells Of St. Mary's (1945)

Bing Crosby reprises his "Going My Way" role of dedicated priest Father O'Malley, who faces a challenge when he's sent to shore up a financially troubled parish and enters a battle of wits with strong-willed nun Ingrid Bergman. With Henry Travers. 126 min.

63-1001 \$14.99



Star Spangled Rhythm (1942)

A parade of Hollywood's biggest stars were enlisted for this tuneless comedy starring Eddie Bracken as a sailor who brings his pals to Paramount Studios to meet his father, a guard and one-time cowboy star now posing as a movie honcho. Bing Crosby, Betty Hutton, Bob Hope, Alan Ladd, Mary Martin, Dick Powell and Victor Moore lead the cast; songs include "Hit the Road to Dreamland."

07-2129 AVAILABLE 7/94 \$14.99



Going Hollywood (1933)

Delightful early MGM musical-comedy with Bing Crosby as a singer with aspirations of making it big in Hollywood who finds himself caught between a seductive actress (Fifi D'Orsay) and a pretty French teacher (Marion Davies). Songs include "After Sundown," "We'll Make Hay While the Sun Shines" and the title tune. With Patsy Kelly and Ned Sparks. 78 min.

12-2684 \$19.99

Holiday Inn (1942)

Irving Berlin's musical trip through the calendar featuring the film debut of "White Christmas." Bing Crosby is an entertainer who tries to get the stage life and buys a country inn to relax, only to find he can't escape show biz, especially when hooper Fred Astaire tries to woo Bing's girl. 101 min.

07-1075 WAS \$19.99 \$14.99

A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court (1949)

Bing Crosby stars in this fanciful musical version of Mark Twain's immortal classic, as a blacksmith is thrown back in time to 8th-century Camelot. He's immediately pegged a wizard by Merlin and forced to joust Sir Lancelot for the hand of King Arthur's niece (Rhonda Fleming). Co-stars Sir Cedric Hardwicke and William Bendix. 108 min.

07-1510 WAS \$29.99 \$14.99



Rhythm On The River (1940)

After his wife leaves him, songwriter Basil Rathbone has problems penning tunes, so he enlists separately young tunesmiths Bing Crosby and Mary Martin to write some new numbers. The two meet and decide to take credit for their work, meeting Rathbone's wrath in the process. Oscar Levant and William Frawley co-star. Songs include "That's For Me" and "When the Moon Comes Over Madison Square."

07-2125 AVAILABLE 7/94 \$14.99

Mr. Music (1950)

Frothy musical comedy fun with Bing Crosby as a semi-retired songwriter who is lured back to help an on-the-slids Broadway producer stage a comeback show. Nancy Olson, Charles Coburn and Tom Ewell co-star, with special appearances by Groucho Marx, Peggy Lee, and Marge and Gower Champion. Songs include "Life Is So Peculiar," "High on the List." 113 min.

06-2060 \$14.99

Here Comes The Groom (1951)

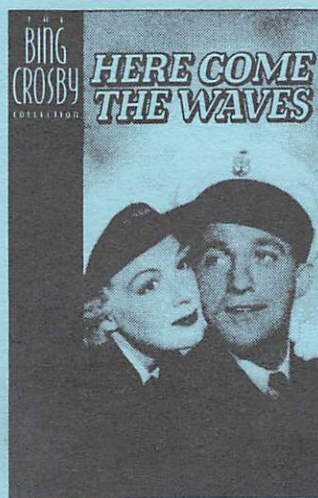
Frank Capra directed this happy-go-lucky musical-comedy that stars Bing Crosby as a journalist who has to persuade former wife Jane Wyman to remarry him in order to adopt two French orphans. Featuring Franchot Tone and Alexis Smith, cameos by Dorothy Lamour, Louis Armstrong and Phil Harris and the Academy Award-winning song, "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening." 113 min.

06-1745 \$14.99

White Christmas (1954)

Movies Unlimited is proud to present the all-time holiday favorite complete with Irving Berlin score, Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney, Vera-Ellen, frolicking laughs and good times for all. A treat for the entire family. 120 min.

06-1305 \$14.99



Here Come The Waves (1944)

Terrific tuner with Bing Crosby as a singing idol who joins pal Sonny Tufts in the Navy during World War II. Although he's seeking combat action, Bing becomes the director of benefit shows and soon falls in love with a woman who has an identical twin (both are played by Betty Hutton). Songs include "Accentuate the Positive," "That Old Black Magic" and "I Promise You."

07-2128 AVAILABLE 7/94 \$14.99

Just For You (1952)

Widower Bing Crosby has his hands full trying to juggle his Broadway producer job, his engagement to Jane Wyman, and the demands of raising two teenagers in this spry musical comedy. Songs include "Zing a Little Zong," "I'll Si-Si Ya in Bahia" and the title tune. With Natalie Wood, Robert Arthur, Ethel Barrymore. 95 min.

06-2122 \$14.99

The Country Girl (1954)

Grace Kelly won an Oscar for her heartfelt performance as the wife of an alcoholic singer attempting a comeback. Bing Crosby, William Holden. 104 min.

06-1172 \$14.99



High Society (1956)

Grace Kelly's last film was this lively musical remake of "The Philadelphia Story," with Grace (appropriately) as the Main Line gal who must choose between Bing Crosby and John Lund. Frank Sinatra, Celeste Holm and Louis Armstrong co-star; Cole Porter score includes "True Love," "Did You Ever?" and "You're Sensational." 107 min.

12-1417 \$19.99



The Emperor Waltz (1948)

Uncharacteristically fluffy entertainment from writer-director Billy Wilder features Bing Crosby as a photographer salesman in Austria who tries to pitch his product to the country's emperor while attempting to woo the monarch's niece (Joan Fontaine). Richard Haydn and Sig Ruman co-star; tunes include "I Kiss Your Hand," "Friendly Mountains" and "The Emperor's Waltz."

07-2127 AVAILABLE 7/94 \$14.99

Robin And The Seven Hoods (1964)

The last of the "Rat Pack" films is set in Roaring Twenties Chicago, and Sinatra and crew play garrulous gangsters who rob from the rich and give to the poor, and themselves. Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr., Bing Crosby, Peter Falk co-star; great score includes "My Kind of Town." 103 min.

19-1595 \$19.99



Blue Skies (1946)

A musical extravaganza filled with classic Irving Berlin tunes and detailing a love triangle involving nightclub owner Bing Crosby, chorus girl Joan Caulfield and hooper Fred Astaire. Follow their relationships over a quarter-century, and enjoy dandy dancing, glorious color and songs like "Puttin' on the Ritz," "You Keep Coming Back Like a Song" and "White Christmas."

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Bing Crosby's Collector's Set

Catch some of "Der Bingle's" finest musical moments in this set that includes the films "Here Come The Waves," "We're Not Dressing," "The Emperor Waltz" and "Rhythm on the River."

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